

Commentary

Volume Fifty-two, Number One, July 1971

**PAUL GOODMAN
ERICH HELLER**

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Memoirs of a Fraternity Man
Joseph Epstein

East Is West?
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A Modern Master
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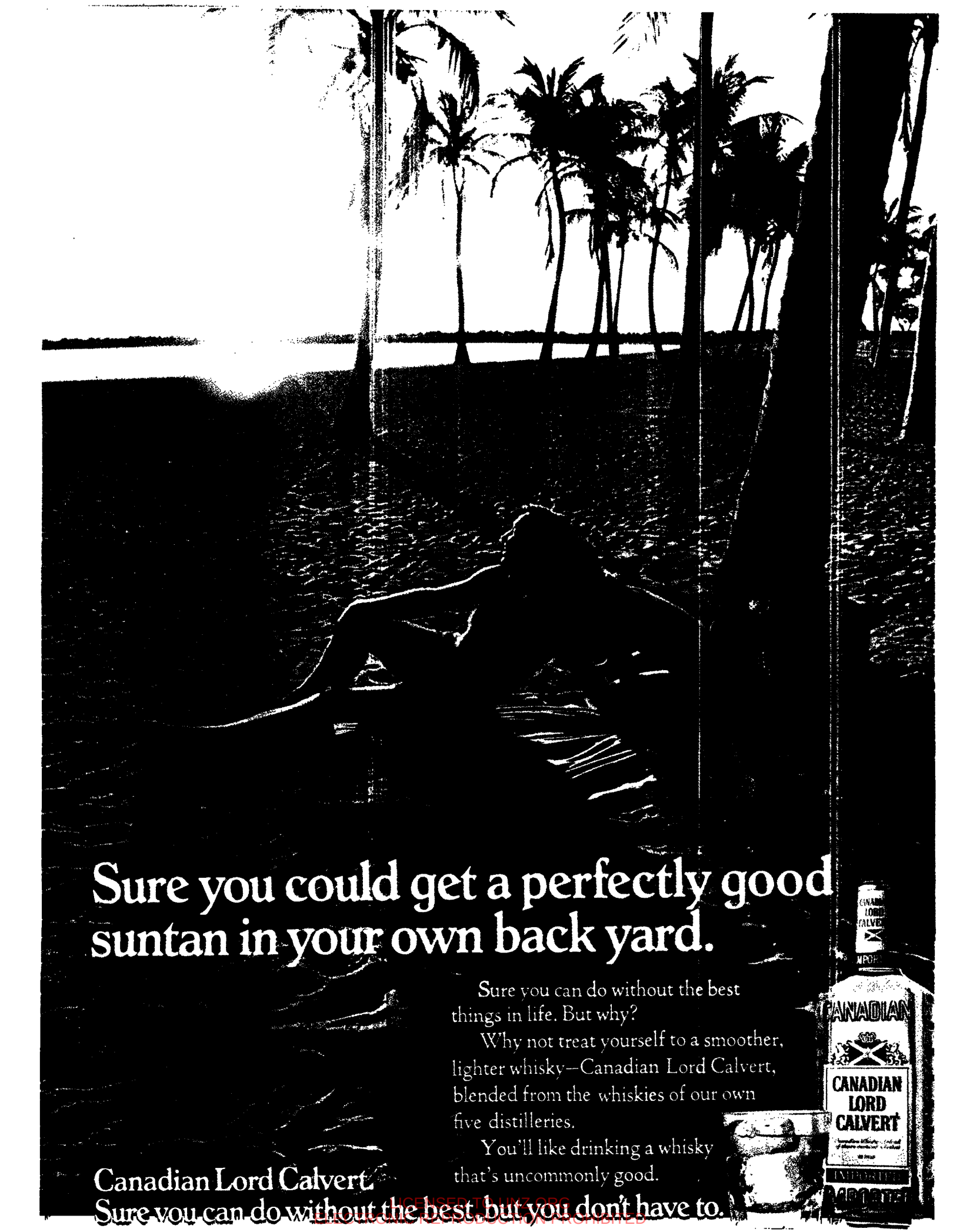
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Review:

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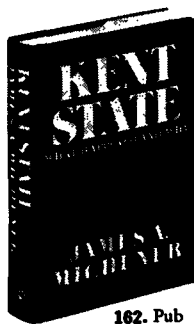
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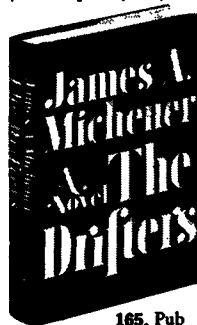
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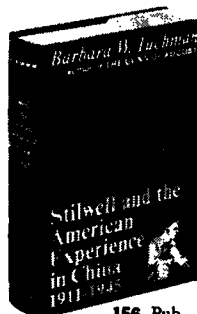


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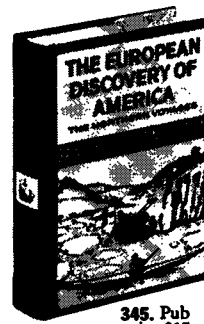
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Commentary

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Repentance and a Stand

Norman Podhoretz

THINKING about the situation in response to which men like Paul Goodman (p. 39) and Erich Heller (p. 47) have been driven—once again!—to make the case for literature; thinking about the hostility on all sides to literary values and the indifference to them where so recently there was respect, I found myself wryly remembering that once, as a practicing literary critic, I wrote the following sentences: “A literary critic ought—or so they tell me—to regard literature as an end in itself; otherwise he has no business being a literary critic. For better or worse, however, I do not regard literature as an end in itself. . . . I look upon it as a mode of public discourse that either illuminates or fails to illuminate the common ground on which we live.”

Now I meant by this to challenge the enormous confidence of the literary world of the 1940's and 50's, its smug insularity, and the sterile aestheticism into which, as it seemed to me, it had begun a catastrophic descent, with a mistaken idea of the autonomy of literature to justify and legitimate the fall. I had, I think, a point, and I would still wish to insist on a conception of the autonomy of literature based on the model of a sovereign nation engaged in lively commerce with the rest of the world rather than a xenophobic one turned in upon itself in fear of foreign influence. Nevertheless, knowing what I know now—how empty the confidence of the liter-

ary world actually was—and having seen what I have seen—a community unable to defend the values it holds in sacred trust against even the flimsiest charges of irrelevance or obsolescence or “elitism”—: knowing all this, I repent of those sentences that once upon a time I wrote.

Not everyone can, and perhaps not everyone should, regard literature as an end in itself, needing no justification from religion or science or politics or any other aggressively expansionist domain of human action or knowledge. But writers certainly should, critics should, and teachers should—just as “they” once told me. It was not for the better, it was for the worse, that I, a critic, refused to regard literature as an end in itself. For in practicing criticism without the license of that belief, I was fostering the growth of a vulgar idea of the relevance of literature and thereby helping to subvert both the general understanding of what the autonomy of literature truly means and the general esteem for the literary mode and the virtues distinctive to it—to it alone and to no other mode of expression or public discourse.

I was, of course, not the only citizen of the Republic of Letters who contributed to such subversion. There was, for example, the well-known literary scholar whose crassly simplistic views of the relation of literature to politics have not prevented him from becoming the President of the Modern Language Association. And others con-

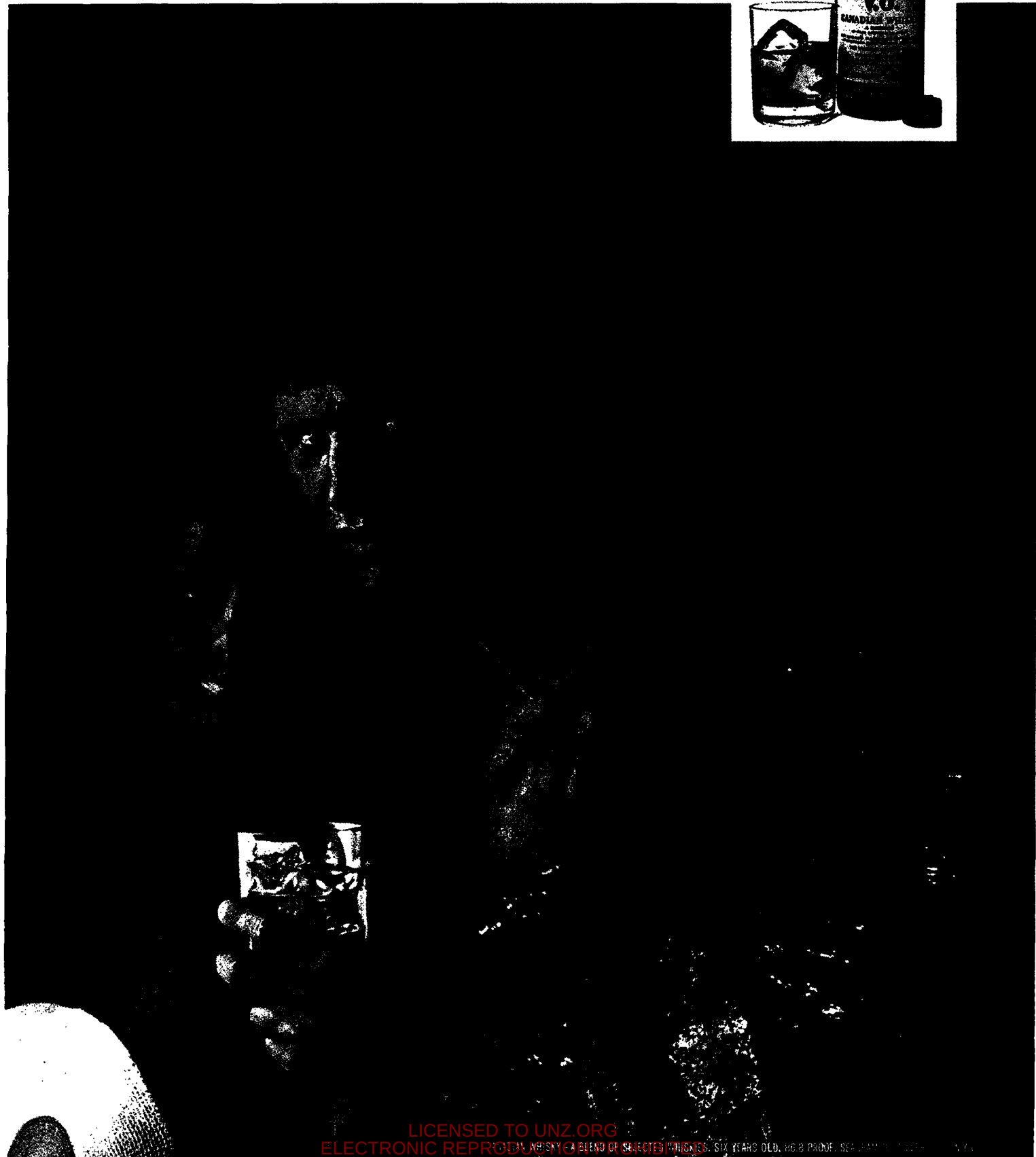
tributed even more: one has only to mention the illustrious names of Marshall McLuhan, Leslie Fiedler, and Susan Sontag, each of whom lent a further degree of plausibility to the gloating notion that literature had become irrelevant or obsolete, and did so not only in argument but also by using the intellectual weapons of the Republic of Letters itself to celebrate the activities of some of its most aggressive and most egregiously philistine enemies. I myself did nothing so grand, but I did my share, such as it was, and I am sorry for any harm my words may have caused.

ON ANOTHER occasion and in another context, I wrote the following sentences: “Either a critic does care, and care passionately, when a bad book is praised and does believe enough in the importance of discrimination to put all personal considerations aside in the fixing and arguing of a judgment, or he is no critic regardless of how much ‘criticism’ he writes. . . . Translated into plain English, the idea that wrong critical judgments do not really matter means that the literature in question does not really matter, that it lacks the power to shape the spirit of the age, to mold and extend consciousness, to heighten a sense of reality which would otherwise be dulled, to make order where there would otherwise be disorder, to bring life to the mind and imagination where there would otherwise be illness and death.” Of *these* sentences I do not repent. On the contrary, knowing what I know now and having seen what I have seen, around sentiments like the ones expressed in those sentences I would hope that the Republic of Letters—writers, critics, and teachers—might in the future reconstitute itself and make a permanent stand. ■

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Letters from Readers

The Press and the President

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan was most kind and generous in his reference to me in "The Presidency & the Press" [March]. But the more I studied the article, the more troubled I became by his rather sweeping and unpleasant generalizations. And the more I studied his particular complaints against the *New York Times*, the more I found him to be confusing a most serious and difficult problem with trivial, inadequate, and basically unfair criticism. My first impulse was to ignore him—benignly.

But others found the specific charges against the *Times*'s performance to be so serious that they required either public confession or rebuttal. This led to a most wasteful examination of the more frivolous aspects of the indictment. If, in what follows, the more substantial parts of Mr. Moynihan's essay are not treated as fully as I would like, we at least share the blame.

First, about the two horror stories from the *Times*.

The story on November 15, 1970, about blacks seeking tougher equality standards in the Civil Service, was by no fair standard a crusade for the blacks, an attack on the Nixon administration, a campaign for racial quotas or for anything else. As Mr. Moynihan himself noted, the story was in fact friendly to the administration. It recorded the blacks' complaints about jobs and promotion to senior jobs "under either party." It said that few critics of hiring and promotion practices would have the government establish formal racial quotas and found most of them acknowledging that movement, although slow, is occurring under the present system. If that was the work of a reporter who wished to make things look worse than they are, as the article suggested, then I am naive and Mr. Moynihan is clairvoyant.

The only concrete complaint here was that our reporter did not choose to write about something she was not writing about—the Postal Service and non-Civil Service categories of federal employment. Adding those statistics, it is argued, would have shown blacks occupying a relatively larger share of all

government jobs. I believe they also should have shown blacks getting a still smaller share of senior and supervisory positions. To pick that fault in one sentence of a long and commendably judicious article suggests to me that Mr. Moynihan wants not only reasonably sophisticated renderings of a situation but positive help in defeating all complaints from blacks, militant or otherwise. If we erred at all, it was in accepting the employment figures of several departments that we now have reason to believe exaggerated the status of blacks. (The further petty complaint that our reporter had the black population "estimated in the 1970 census as 12.9 per cent"—whereas Mr. Moynihan knew the "official census figures" to have shown 12.4 per cent—deserves a petty answer: both numbers are wrong, but at least our reporter properly labeled hers as an estimate. The "official" figure, when finally produced, was 11.2 per cent. In Mr. Moynihan's language, this would justify the scoffing remark that nagging academicians "routinely make such mistakes.")

In any case, I fail to understand what place this story and critique has in what attempts to be a serious and broadly philosophical discussion of journalism. It proves nothing about our business, good or bad, not even that our reporters are more vulnerable to one type of propaganda and statistical juggling than another. Ideally, of course, every such story is not a matching of claims and complaints, charges and responses, but a scientific and independent analysis of a question. It could be argued that we should never report either what critics say or what defenders retort, but only what we ourselves have established to our own satisfaction as irrefutably true, not only in fact but in spirit. We would have a very thin newspaper; perhaps none at all.

The second complaint about the *Times* is more complicated and points to some interesting sins of commission and omission both at the *Times* and in the administration. Overall, I will let others decide which are the more serious.

THE criticisms, in chronological order:

1) That we did not report the

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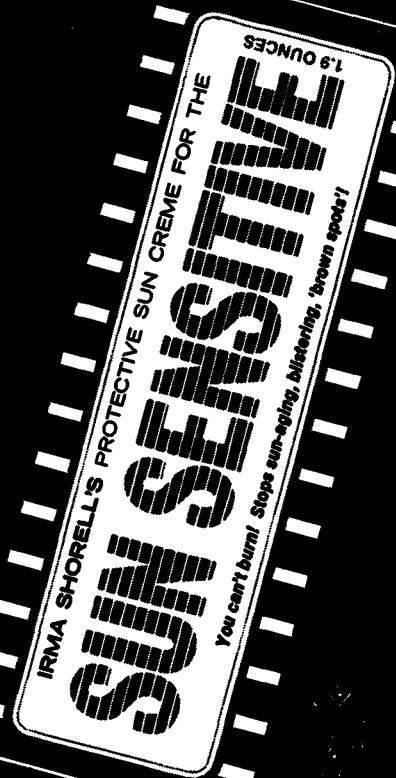
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"somewhat garbled" numbers Robert Finch disclosed on July 23, 1970 at the briefing on the Heard report, about some additional aid for black colleges.

2) That we did not carry the press release dated August 11, 1970, in which the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education welcomed this "excellent first step," termed it not adequate, but looked hopefully for more in the future.

3) That on September 14, 1970 we did carry and feature on page one a story about the presidents of nine Negro colleges charging the administration with neglect and insensitivity.

4) That we did not print a letter from one of the above presidents complaining that he had been misquoted in the "lack of sensitivity" remark, commending the President for responding with \$27 million in additional funds, and describing that response as "limited."

5) That we carried another front-page story from the Associated Press on October 2, 1970, reporting that HEW Secretary Elliot Richardson disclosed a \$30-million increase in aid as Nixon's response to appeals from Negro educators.

6) That we again referred to the blacks' complaints and criticism of the President in a story on January 3, 1971, reporting their inability to draw on much of the new aid because they could not meet the matching requirement.

In order:

1) Bob Semple's superb story on the Heard report did not include the sneaky and "garbled" announcement of some new aid for black colleges, even though it dealt with the report's discussion of black colleges by Alexander Heard and James Cheek. Why not? Semple does not know. He suspects that when the 40-page Heard report was dumped on reporters at 4:30 that afternoon, he felt compelled to delve into it so quickly that he either ran off to the office or sat through the briefing without really listening to the addenda.

Let us be very straight here about the order and magnitude of sins. The Heard report was not to the liking of the administration and it was shoveled out late one afternoon to complicate the life of any reporter who might wish to deal with it in a big or careful way. As Mr. Moynihan remarks,

the news about some new money for black colleges was thrown in "to strike a positive note about the Heard-Cheek effort"; or, as I would have put it, thrown in to undermine even further the attention that might be given to Heard's major conclusions. It was thrown in hastily and sloppily, *not* for the purpose of informing the public in a careful way but to serve the propaganda purposes of the White House. And the figures given out were not "somewhat garbled." They were wrong.

I can regret Semple's oversight without in the slightest faulting him.

Had Mr. Moynihan chosen to list his complaints against us in a straightforward chronological order, *the entire episode*, and all the stories that troubled him would have been seen to follow from this very cheap stunt. (In truth, I did not expect, in looking into his complaints, to find such a good example of the reasons for our mistrust of government, and of the White House in particular.)

But let us also tally up our mutual sins of omission.

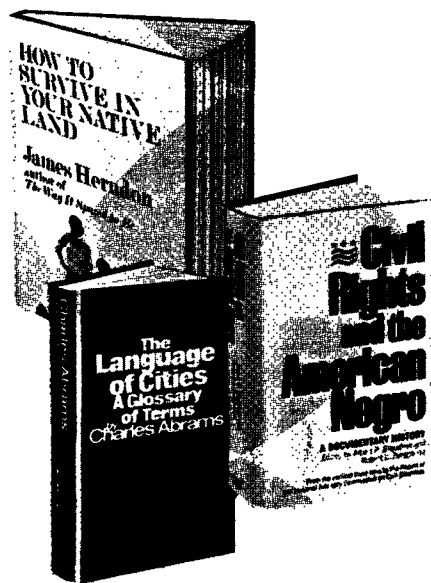
I can find no evidence that Ziegler, or Finch, or anyone else at that meeting set out the next morning to call our attention to the fact that we had missed what the White House regarded as an important story. Indeed, *I find no evidence that anyone apologized for issuing the wrong figures or tried to set the record straight.*

(The wrong Finch figures remain wrong in the weekly compilation of Presidential documents.) What a lovely opportunity to summon the reporters and apologize for misleading them, cheering the good fortune that they had overlooked the garbled announcement, and inviting them to treat it fully and accurately on the second bounce! Should I conclude that hardly anyone gave a damn now that there was no longer any need to deflate Heard?

If the White House felt it important to get the story into print, it surely did not lack the means or know-how.

Later that year, in ignoring Heard's very explicit advice and setting out to make political capital of campus disturbances, the President and his aides showed themselves to be very skillful indeed in getting their message across. And when two stones were thrown in the direction of the President's car in Vermont--out of

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sight of most of the reporters in his party—Ziegler and Company showed extraordinary zeal and imagination in making certain that the news reached the nation, over and over again. My point is—and it relates to the essay's larger question about the balance of forces between press and government—that a President demonstrably has no difficulty publicizing any news or attitudes about which he feels strongly.

2) I do not know anything about the press release of August 11, 1970, except Mr. Moynihan's brief quotation from it. In a sense, I am glad we did not encounter it, for the chances are fifty-fifty that a story about the reaction of the black educators would have combined their expression of gratitude with their complaints of inadequacy, and only deepened Mr. Moynihan's anger.

He may feel free to run down the group's motives by suggesting that their verdict of insufficiency was delivered not from the facts but from "the accepted and understood manner of interest groups." But we usually feel compelled to stop short of such a public judgment. (Should we have reported the famous Moynihan farewell address as a statement "in the manner of departing White House officials who want to retain some influence with the boss"? I thought it more than that, but others clearly did not.)

Anyhow, two days before the distribution of that press release, on August 9, 1970, the *Times* devoted one-and-a-half columns, which were featured with a picture on page one, to an interview with Robert Brown, the only black aide on the White House staff. The story, by Paul Delaney, covered Brown's review of the full range of Mr. Nixon's relations with blacks. Brown said things were getting better, both because the President had become "much more sensitive" to the problems of blacks and because he had decided to do something about it. Brown said Mr. Nixon was especially stung by some of the harshest charges of Negro leaders. (He was, as portrayed by his aide, *responding*!)

And lo, the last third of the story dwelt on the President's "immediate concern" for getting more federal money for black colleges. And at the very end of the story—appropriately for the kind of story it was, though not the kind of headline announcement the White

House could have fashioned—was the news that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare had increased the allocation for black schools. The figures were there, though still not clearly enough, because it was a little hard to tell whether the administration was redirecting \$120 million in *new* aid or merely redirecting some money to raise the total from \$87.2 million to \$120 million. But the ambiguity was in the administration's favor, and as far as I can tell we still did not receive a clarifying call from the White House.

Nor have we had any complaints about our willingness to feature Mr. Brown's representation of Presidential attitudes about blacks. His account was not "balanced" in every other paragraph with demands for courtroom evidence, nor with recollections of the Carswell episode and other relevant clues to policy. It was not a definitive study of Nixon-Negro relations. The only detours from Brown's comments, after he talked of "more and more" meetings with blacks, were to cite the case of the rebuffed black Congressmen and to record the President's two visits to black communities. All in all, a very one-sided account that neither brought nor merited any complaint.

It *might* have had a small mention, however, in Mr. Moynihan's review of our coverage last summer, though I suspect it would have virtually exploded his whole argument with us. Here we were doing for his side of the case exactly what he deplored our having done for the other side.

3) The story about the charges by nine presidents of Negro colleges, by James Wooten from Chicago, was by all accounts a fair and accurate rendering of the mood and substance of their meeting. I gather Mr. Moynihan does not dispute this. They were complaining about the federal government, about the churches, about American society, about the inadequacy of financial help, and about the inappropriateness of the help that was available. They used strong language. If they had mentioned the increased aid offered them by the administration, they would clearly have denounced it as inadequate and in no way erased the effect of the story. I do not know how much of their rhetoric came from a feeling of genuine despair and how much

was meant merely to earn credentials among more militant constituents. I would guess that both motives were involved.

The fact that they chose to speak in that fashion, justifiably or not, is legitimate news. At least as legitimate as the Brown interview. News, as treated in our society, is not the same as *truth*, though it should always be *true*. The truth is cumulative and rarely discernible on any given day; it embraces motivation and consequence. Newspapers should cumulatively test the news for truth, but they cannot reasonably do so every day and with every story. We are, alas, a forum, not an almanac.

We could argue whether the Wooten story deserved to be on page one. Perhaps not, although this raises a still further question of distortions due to the *relative* value of any day's developments. These are all profound and difficult questions that our craft must face, and in some cases is facing most seriously.

But when all is said and done, we must make value judgments. Mr. Moynihan's logic propels him to the claim that a black man yelling "help" in America today should be treated journalistically as we all now wish we had treated a demagogic Senator yelling "traitor." He is saying that his every assertion should be drained of its emotional purpose and forced to meet the standards of courtroom evidence, or else be played down or even ignored.

Philosophically and politically, he is wrong. A pressure group for neglected citizens, even when it demands exaggerated attention and reparation, is not the same as an organized and officially protected goon-squad attacking individual liberties. The balance of power between the heads of black colleges and the Nixon administration is not the balance that prevailed between Joe McCarthy and his victims. (There is, alas, more similarity between the latter and what many blacks did to my friend Pat Moynihan a few years ago. He was a victim of McCarthyism. But not Nixon. I would hope that despite Mr. Moynihan's wounds he could still recognize the difference.)

It all really does come down to his enormous pity for our poor and enfeebled Presidency! How glad I am that he will now have a chance to observe it from the outside and to amend his thoughts

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of who is strong and who is weak in our society.

4) We did not print Vivian Henderson's letter complaining about misquotation because of our certainty that he had not been misquoted and the further judgment that he was trying to attribute error to us so as to ameliorate the morning-after consequences of his remark. (The story, in any case, and even by Henderson's testimony, would not have been altered by the omission of his remark.) He did not press us to print the letter and has told Wooten he didn't care whether we printed it or not.

Here again there lies a larger question for the press that touches on the wider meaning of the essay. We do need to provide more space where readers and persons in the news can extend, explain, and correct views and facts attributed to them in the news columns. Slowly, our profession is moving in that direction. But I fear the judgments made in this case will still have to be made in that new space. And once again we would face the question of relative power—whether the President's claim on such space, considering his opportunities to make known his views and propaganda, should be equal to the claims of weaker groups and citizens. I don't think so.

5) The AP story about Richardson's "disclosure" of \$30-million more in aid for black colleges did, finally, get that fact out on page one. I cannot locate the material on which the story was based, but I doubt that Richardson clearly explained that the new money had actually been made available and announced *ten weeks earlier*. The administration was not responding to the Chicago complaints but it *was* responding, as the story said, to the appeals of blacks.

6) The final story, by Paul Delaney of the *Times's* Washington bureau, reported that the new money did not, after all, do much to meet the needs of the colleges. It does not accuse anyone of perfidy or trickery. It cites a sad misunderstanding about what the new money could achieve. And it reports the black educators still dissatisfied with the amount of help they have been given.

Mr. Moynihan may have a quarrel with their view. He doesn't have much of a quarrel with that story, nor should he have.

What, then, are we really deal-

ing with here? By his own account, a group organized (early?) in 1969 and received at the White House in October 1969, asked for urgent help. A study was commissioned and a preliminary report was delivered to the White House in February 1970. A fuller report was "printed"—though not publicized?—in June, by which time, Cambodia being Cambodia, and Kent and Jackson State being what they were, there had been another meeting between the President and black college presidents and James Cheek, working with Heard, on temporary White House assignment. And it was when *their* reports, so disappointing to the President and others, had to be published in July that there was rushed out an announcement about some more money for the black colleges, which we were late to report but which in the end, or at least so far, hasn't helped them very much. And the *Times*—no, the whole system of journalism—is roasted by Mr. Moynihan for not dealing intelligently with the issue!

Now to the central point, which I take to be Mr. Moynihan's anguish about a reversal in the "old balance of power" between President and press. He thinks the press is well on the way to upsetting that "balance" to the detriment of effective government.

I found it odd, and negligent, that he never even attempted to define either the *old* balance of power or *any* balance that he deems desirable. This makes it a rather difficult thesis to rebut, especially after he gets through conceding the President's "near limitless capacity" to make news, to dominate events of public concern, to reward friends and punish enemies (and not only in the press corps), and to carry off "formidable deceptions." He can, of course, do much more. He can exhort, rally, and inspire. He can ruin and degrade. He can breathe life into American attitudes and, often, institutions. Or he can distort and discard them. And surely at the apex of anyone's list of Presidential powers is the power to make war, nuclear war, ten-year war, undeclared war, unchecked war, unpopular war, holy war, or pointless war. (If some of our histories are correct in suggesting that the Hearst and Pulitzer press were once able to goad or frighten the country and its President into war, then it would seem that there has

been, indeed, a most remarkable shift in the balance of power, though hardly in the direction Mr. Moynihan suggests.)

But if I read the story correctly, he is not even talking about the collective, though incoherent, power of the press and the television. He is talking largely about the dangerous power of the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*. This is flattering, but hardly persuasive. The great majority of black citizens, whose thoughts he wishes to protect from their own leaders and agitators, do not read either of those newspapers. The papers that they read, across the country, would probably score quite well on his special loyalty test. As for television, I will let him decide, after some months in civilian life, whether it favors the champions of the space program or its critics, whether it is dominated by the ethics of our President or those of his critics, whether on balance it proclaims the old American and governmental virtues, or the virtues of what he calls, in Lionel Trilling's phrase, the "adversary culture."

But all right. It is the *Eastern* press that is threatening us. How?

POINT ONE is that our muckraking tradition has fallen into the hands of a new breed of reporter of middle- and upper-class background, Ivy League, elitist. In Washington, this group constitutes a *social elite*, "with all the accoutrements one associates with a leisured class." We are not leisured, he quickly notes, but our "style is that of men and women who *choose* to work." And the political consequence of this social status is that "the press grows more and more influenced by attitudes genuinely hostile to American society and American government." And the evidence for this is that we have been brainwashed by the "moral absolutism" of George Wald!

Others have taken this absurd standard of pedigree and tallied the preponderance of non-Ivy degrees in the upper reaches of the Washington press corps. Still others, indeed, have noted with a little more relevance that the upper reaches are, in fact, dominated by the "silent generation" that was allegedly cowed into docility in the era of Eisenhower and Joe McCarthy. As for the "charges" of social elitism and our "style of leisure"—these really

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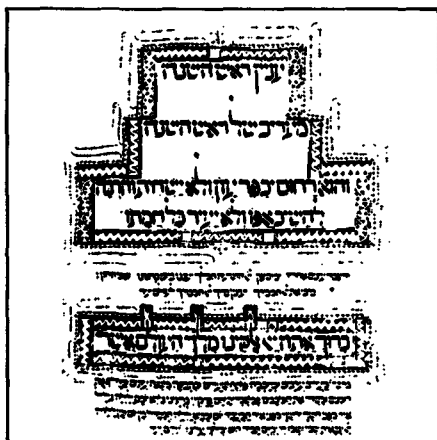
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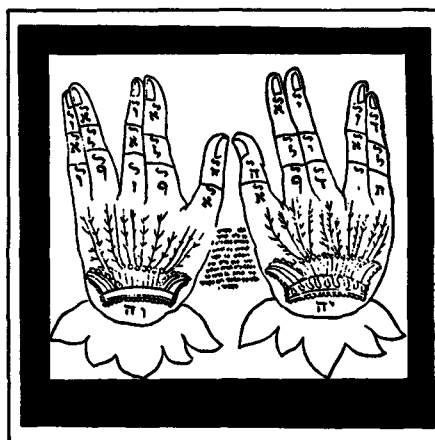
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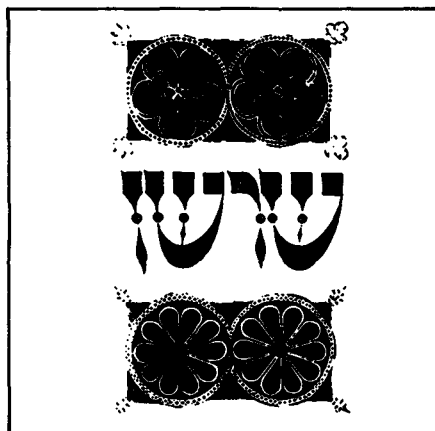
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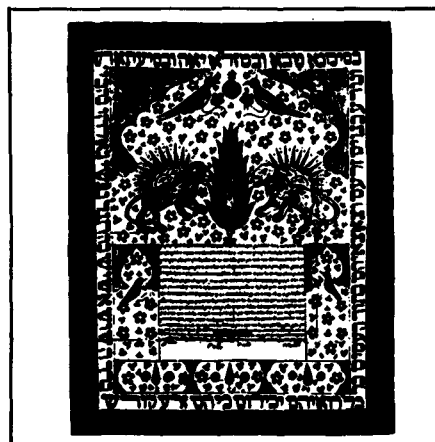
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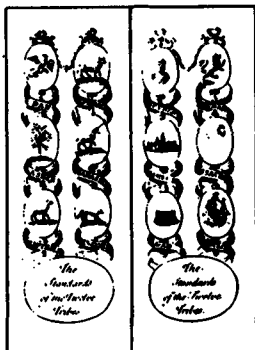
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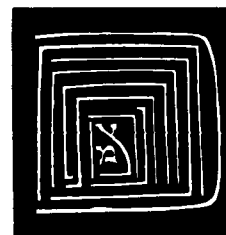
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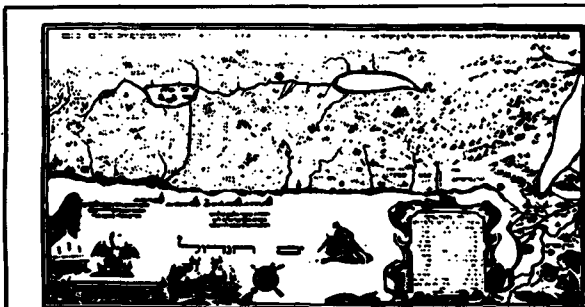
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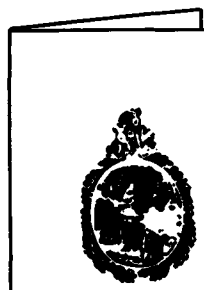
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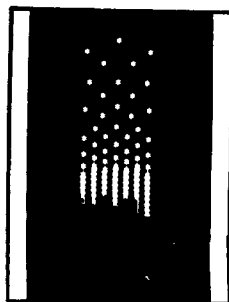
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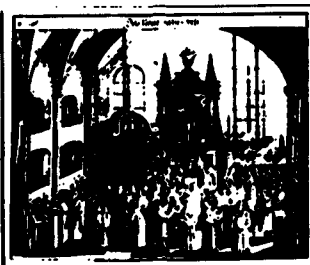
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would have been better expressed if he had simply repeated, "effete snobs."

But how very odd that, in a paragraph devoted to the debunking of moral absolutism—in which Mr. Moynihan complains that people call the Vietnam war shameful instead of tragic, heartbreaking, or misconceived—he would dare to characterize the attitudes of reporters in the press not as wrong, or tragic, or misconceived, but as "hostile to American society and American government." Wow! Let's make it effete and *un-American* snobs.

We are, of course, guilty of having switched, over the last generation, to a more educated corps of reporters, if only to keep up with the credentials and footwork of the holders of public office (and our new critics). The fact is that we are not nearly smart enough yet to cope with the scientific, technological, pseudo-sociological expertise that is peddled to the public by both the government and its critics. And it is a further fact, and perhaps one of the most enduring attractions of our business, that any bright lad of proletarian or other origin can rid himself of the social and hierarchical pressures of our society to participate, as a journalist, in the political process of our country.

(I found it quaint, by the way, that the witnesses summoned against our new elitists were of such clearly non-Eastern and proletarian pedigree as Roger Starr, Lionel Trilling, Thomas E. Cronin, James Q. Wilson, Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, Irving Kristol. Shouldn't we all start printing our colleges beside our names, to facilitate such analysis?)

It is also true, and more relevant to the essay's point, that there are among some of the newest recruits to our business young men and women who are impatient with the "objective" or, more accurately, "neutral" standards of journalism to which their elders aspired. Some of them share Mr. Moynihan's sense of that standard's inadequacy and wish to adjust it. A few of them are impatient with *any* standard that would prevent them from placing their own views before the public. It is an important subject and an interesting debate that news writers have conducted periodically over the decades. More of this in sequence.

POINT TWO suggests that along with hostility toward the Presidency we purvey an absurdly inflated picture of the President's importance and ability to influence events, thus setting a tone of pervasive dissatisfaction with the performance of government, under any President. The *Times* and the *Post* are particularly guilty here, it is argued, because Mr. Moynihan agrees with my contention that a newspaper is as much influenced by those who read it as vice versa.

This is apples and oranges.

We Americans do have an exaggerated expectation of our Presidents and only a handful of them ever fulfill their own promise and boast, even in hindsight. Such is the power and aura of this office that a politician, no matter how poorly regarded over the years, how often suspected and vilified and run down, can assume the office and earn at once not just what you call a "honeymoon" period of grace but a new reputation for nobility and intelligence. And when he begins in lofty manner, promising to heal some of the nation's wounds and to lower his voice, he is made to feel welcome and given the chance to appear as he wishes to appear before his countrymen. The press reflects these expectations of the public and records the efforts of our Presidents and Presidential candidates to nurture them. This faith is either an element of Presidential power, to be cherished and applied with skill by those who can, or it is a terrible burden, as Mr. Moynihan would have it.

If it is a burden, then only a President who insists from the start that he does *not* know everything, cannot change too much, and will aspire only to a modest program of action can correct the nation's view. How about a President who will work for a *year* of peace at a time, instead of a *generation*? Or one who begins by saying that a new Attorney General will *not* solve much of our crime problem? Or one who tells us how many loafers there really are on welfare and how much more sophisticated he has become, once in office, about the "welfare mess"?

We do try to match promise against performance and cumulatively we manage, I think, to draw a pretty good portrait of the strengths and weaknesses of the Presidency and any particular oc-

cupant thereof. But those who find the underlying truths obscured, must begin by noting not the power for occasional deception in the White House but the *habit* of regular deception in our politics and administration.

By and large, it is the President and the federal government who establish the agenda of public discussion and they must choose whether their purpose shall be uplifting and educational or merely manipulative. It is the damnable tendency toward manipulation that forces us so often into the posture of apparent adversaries.

We have indeed progressively lost our naiveté about the truthfulness of Presidents and government, starting with the U-2 affair a decade ago. A. J. Liebling found the awakening after U-2 to be the "beginning of wisdom" in the country and in the press. We lost the habit of reporting as fact what was only a contention or claim of our highest officials. And there is nothing in the record of the current administration, ten years later, to break us of the new habit of treating virtually every official utterance as a carefully contrived rendering that needs to be examined for the missing word or phrase, the sly use of statistics, the slippery syntax or semantics. Planes fly to "interdict supplies" but not in support of combat infantry, until such support becomes an "ancillary" benefit and until, finally, it becomes exposed as the *real* purpose of the flights. Troops do not engage in "ground combat" as long as they hover *two feet above the ground* in helicopters. Estimates of the gross national product turn out, within weeks, to be only targets.

If this shift from simple credulity to informed skepticism is the change of balance Mr. Moynihan deplures, then I plead guilty.

He will have to take it on faith that we practice this skepticism not in the spirit of persecution or prosecution, but from a sense of wishing to serve our readers with reports of what is really going on. I will not deny that, once discovered, governmental trickery in and of itself often becomes more "newsworthy" than the report itself. But a President or government dedicated to truth-telling and eager to inform the public could very rapidly turn the wolves of the press into lambs.

My contention that readers shape a newspaper as much as it

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shapes them bears on this, but only indirectly.

Our skepticism *does* reflect that of our readers and it is mutually reinforcing. As George Reedy so wisely reflected in thinking back on his tour as President Johnson's press secretary, "The reality is that a President has no press problems (except for a few minor administrative technicalities), but he does have political problems, all of which are reflected in their most acute form by the press."

A few more excerpts from Reedy's *The Twilight of the Presidency*:

There is a deep-seated human tendency to confuse unhappy news with unhappy events and to assume that if the news can be altered, so can the events.

In reality, the problem of a President in dealing with the press is precisely the same as his problem in dealing with the public at large. But no President can find it within his ego to concede that he has failed in any degree with the public. It is far more satisfying to blame his failures on the press because his problems then can be attributed to a conspiracy. He can blame the "Eastern press," the "Republican press," or the "liberal press." He then does not stand indicted within his own consciousness (the most terrible court of all) as having failed.

We reflect, or refract, but we do not simply create skepticism or dissatisfaction.

But I was speaking in a still larger sense. What is it, I asked, that makes newspapers accept some value judgments and not others? Why do we write in a different spirit about one kind of crime, say simple murder, than we do about another, say civil disobedience? Why do Northern and Western newspapers write, unquestionably, from the point of view of those who regard official segregation as not only illegal but also wrong, while some Southern newspapers give the racist equal standing in the court of opinion?

This is how I came to my answer that we are mutually influenced by the attitudes and values of our communities. The newspaper that is candidly written from the viewpoint of the home folks finds nothing wrong in sports coverage that is candidly partisan for the home team. But when the teams in contention are from the same community, the coverage sud-

denly turns "neutral." Why? Because the community is divided. We covered World War II from the partisan viewpoint of the Allies. Not so, by and large, the war in Vietnam. We did not, on a large scale, question or ignite debate on the crossing of the 38th Parallel in Korea in 1950, but we did examine and feed controversy on the bombing across the 17th Parallel in Vietnam. Not because we alone decided that one war was more clearly just than another, or one frontier more inviolate than another, but because the communities to which we reported were divided on the issue of Vietnam in sufficient degree to alter our perspective.

If I am right, then the interconnection is quite different from the one Mr. Moynihan suggests. A President does not enhance his power to govern by converting a few reporters or selling them on his point of view. He will more likely gain the trust—if not always the active support—of the press by gaining the trust and confidence of the community.

POINT THREE is that we are "fairly continuously" involved in the receipt of information passed to us by disloyal bureaucrats. Mr. Moynihan terms this as something "less than honorable" on our part, though he implies that receiving special information from bureaucrats who are "loyal" is okay. He says no one knows much about the process of "leaking" and that it has not been "studied."

Well, I know a great deal about it. The first thing that needs to be said is that the *deliberate* disclosure of information for the purpose of injuring the President is relatively rare. But what is rarer still is that such information finds its way into print without "the other side," whatever that may be in our judgment, being questioned about the matter and given a chance to discuss the deeper issues and even the motives of those who may have done the leaking. The great majority of deliberate "leaks" are not secret documents and papers, but guarded suggestions that a reporter look into a matter that he might otherwise neglect. More often than not, he is not even told what he will find.

And the absolute majority of unwanted "leaks" are not deliberate at all. They result from a diligent study of public papers and diligent inquiry among dozens of

officials, with reporters carefully playing one set of clues against another, until they find a part of what they seek. Most of these officials make themselves available not because they wish to abet the effort but because over time they have found their accessibility to be desirable for loyal purposes. It is true that in this process, when reporters have some interesting facts, but by no means all the facts, and find themselves shut out by government, they will then publish what they know for the purpose of lighting a fire that will smoke out a good deal more. For even when a first, unwanted story is incomplete or superficial, if it touches on an important subject, it will almost always arouse the attention and curiosity of other reporters who will, together, move it much closer to the essence of the tale.

Yet even if deliberate "leaking" were as harmful as Mr. Moynihan suggests, is it his contention that the press should ignore such information and pretend it was never received? That would be an interesting discussion indeed.

POINT FOUR deals with the "rub" that he finds adhering to our concept of objectivity. It comes, he observes, "when a decision has to be made as to whether an event really is news, or simply a happening, a non-event staged for the purpose of getting into the papers or onto the screen." (I note that television has been allowed back into the defendant's box.)

It is not the experience with Joe McCarthy that should be used to instruct us on this point. We were deficient in treating him—in part because we reflected and responded to the deficiency and gullibility of our communities—but as long as men who remember that experience are alive, we will probably apply the lessons learned.

The difficulty comes in the way in which Mr. Moynihan states the problem: "*simply* a happening, a non-event staged for the purpose of getting into the papers." A quarter of a million persons marching on the White House? A series of "teach-ins"? An agitator yelling "burn"? A Vice President attacking the papers (and the screen)? Lee Harvey Oswald? The quest for recognition, to be heard, to be noticed, to be heeded—it often takes the form of a happening staged for the purpose of getting into the papers, but it is rarely

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"simply" that in either motivation or consequence.

The problem for thoughtful journalism is that we can never be sure about motivation and we certainly cannot know consequence. And in some small measure, at least, we know that we contribute to consequence. These are horrendous problems and we lose sleep over them, but they are not solved by the automatic assumption in our editorial suites of the absolute power to decide that Moynihan deserves to be heard, and another man does not. And has he thought about the agitator who *may* be encouraged in his extremism because he finds it to be "newsworthy"? What would he do to project his cause and gain attention for himself if he were shut out of the news? Burn, perhaps, instead of only shouting "burn"?

POINT FIVE raises the "absence of a professional tradition of self-correction." In one sense, of course, we correct ourselves every morning, a requirement and an opportunity that most other institutions, including the Presidency, lack.

Mr. Moynihan's evidence does not make this point very well, but there is need, in another sense, for more correction or expansion and amendment of what we report. Persons who figure in our news coverage do occasionally need more space to explain their points of view or involvement in affairs than is provided in existing columns for guest-writers and Letters to the Editor. And clearly the need is greater in some papers than others. But as I suggested earlier, such opportunity for correction is rarely denied to the White House. Men of power—or presumed power—are able to make their views known, almost by definition. It is ordinary citizens, sometimes, of late, including the editors of the Eastern press, who require an outlet.

If our Presidents are seriously concerned about "protracted conflict" with a large enough segment of our population and genuinely believe, with Mr. Moynihan, that they are steadily losing that conflict, they had better look well beyond the bearers of the bad news and certainly well beyond the morning paper. They might even look in a mirror.

MAX FRANKEL

The New York Times
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... It is Daniel P. Moynihan's contention that the press—and he is chiefly concerned with the Washington correspondents—has in our time developed what he chooses to call an "almost feckless hostility to power"—power as personified by the President and the President's men. ... He traces that hostility back to the turn-of-the-century muckraking tradition, which concerned itself primarily with the derelictions of municipal government. The muckrakers, distinctly middle or upper-middle class in origin, made millions aware of the "Shame of the Cities," in Lincoln Steffens's phrase. ... It is Mr. Moynihan's contention that the culture of disparagement, directed against Tammany Hall or Standard Oil some seventy years ago, has in our own time been turned against the national government, above all the Presidency, by a no-less-elitist group of Washington correspondents. Mr. Moynihan makes much of the unquestioned fact that more and more Washington correspondents, the men through whom the American people get their impression of what the government is up to, are graduates of prestigious universities, liberal for the most part, affluent to a degree—in short, an enduring social elite. Presidents come and go. Parties lose or gain power. But in Mr. Moynihan's view the Washington press is eternal—enjoying "all the accoutrements one associates with a leisured class."

Now it would be easy but (as Richard Nixon himself might say) a cheap shot to suggest that Mr. Moynihan may have spent too many evenings in the Georgetown establishment of particular correspondents—say Joe Alsop, who happens not to be renowned in Washington for his hostility to Presidential power. But let us move on to Mr. Moynihan's more penetrating social comments. There can be no doubt that Washington correspondents today are better educated and better paid than a generation ago. It is a change that I would have expected Mr. Moynihan to welcome. Instead he complains that "the political consequence of the rising social status of journalism is that the press grows more and more influenced by attitudes genuinely hostile to American society and American government."

Now that seems to me a somewhat questionable generalization,

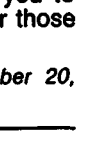
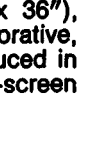
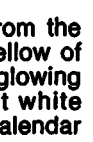
worthy of Mr. Agnew himself. Is Mr. Moynihan, now again a member of the Harvard faculty, trying to tell us that an Ivy League education, accompanied by upward social mobility, necessarily conditions a young journalist to adopt attitudes hostile to American society? If so, I would ask him to reconsider the logic of that proposition.

We come now to proposition two: Certain liberal Americans, many of whom read the New York Times and the Washington Post, have an inflated notion of Presidential omnipotence. They are said to believe in what Thomas E. Cronin has described as a "textbook President" whose power to control events, as we all know, is easily exaggerated. Thus the Times and the Post, together with their liberal, Eastern-seaboard readers, help to set a tone of pervasive dissatisfaction with the performance of the national government, whoever the Presidential incumbent may be and whatever the substance of his policies, because no real President can ever live up to the textbook model. I find it curious that a scholar of Mr. Moynihan's standing should try to persuade us that two newspapers in particular—the same two incidentally that Mr. Agnew has taken as his targets—are uniquely or primarily responsible for the great expectations that the American people repose in their President and the sorry disenchantments that too often follow.

Mr. Moynihan's third proposition is that the press gets too much of its information through clandestine methods out of bureaucrats who, according to him, are frequently and in some cases routinely antagonistic to Presidential interests. He gets quite worked up over such disloyalty to the President on the part of civil servants. ...

Let me grant that I have known my share of self-serving bureaucrats. Yet I would ask Mr. Moynihan in turn to grant me that opposition to specific policies or actions of a President, any President, is not by definition shameful or disloyal. He has served under the last three Presidents. Is he absolutely certain that in every case the President was motivated only by a higher sense of service to the nation and humanity at large? Has he never met a self-serving President? Not even in an election year? Clearly Mr. Moynihan is a

LIMITED EDITION

Jewish Calendar 5732	
September 1 Monday First Day of Rosh Hashana 2 Tuesday Second Day of Rosh Hashana 3 Wednesday Fast of Gedaliah 4 Wednesday Simchat Torah	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
October 4 Monday First Day of Sukkot 5 Tuesday Second Day of Sukkot 6 Wednesday Third Day of Sukkot 7 Thursday Fourth Day of Sukkot 8 Friday Fifth Day of Sukkot 9 Saturday Sixth Day of Sukkot 10 Sunday Seventh Day of Sukkot 11 Monday Eighth Day of Sukkot 12 Tuesday Ninth Day of Sukkot 13 Wednesday Tenth Day of Sukkot 14 Thursday Eleventh Day of Sukkot 15 Friday Twelfth Day of Sukkot 16 Saturday Thirteenth Day of Sukkot 17 Sunday Fourteenth Day of Sukkot 18 Monday Fifteenth Day of Sukkot 19 Tuesday Sixteenth Day of Sukkot 20 Wednesday Seventeenth Day of Sukkot 21 Thursday Eighteenth Day of Sukkot 22 Friday Nineteenth Day of Sukkot 23 Saturday Twentieth Day of Sukkot 24 Sunday Twenty-first Day of Sukkot 25 Monday Twenty-second Day of Sukkot 26 Tuesday Twenty-third Day of Sukkot 27 Wednesday Twenty-fourth Day of Sukkot 28 Thursday Twenty-fifth Day of Sukkot 29 Friday Twenty-sixth Day of Sukkot 30 Saturday Twenty-seventh Day of Sukkot 31 Sunday Twenty-eighth Day of Sukkot	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
November 18 Thursday New Moon Kisle, 1st day 19 Friday New Moon Kisle, 2nd day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
December 13 Monday First Day of Hanukkah 14 Tuesday Second Day of Hanukkah 15 Wednesday Third Day of Hanukkah 16 Thursday Fourth Day of Hanukkah 17 Friday Fifth Day of Hanukkah 18 Saturday Sixth Day of Hanukkah 19 Sunday Seventh Day of Hanukkah 20 Monday Eighth Day of Hanukkah 21 Tuesday Ninth Day of Hanukkah 22 Wednesday Tenth Day of Hanukkah 23 Thursday Eleventh Day of Hanukkah 24 Friday Twelfth Day of Hanukkah 25 Saturday Thirteenth Day of Hanukkah 26 Sunday Fourteenth Day of Hanukkah 27 Monday Fifteenth Day of Hanukkah 28 Tuesday Sixteenth Day of Hanukkah 29 Wednesday Seventeenth Day of Hanukkah 30 Thursday Eighteenth Day of Hanukkah 31 Friday Nineteenth Day of Hanukkah	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
1972 January 17 Monday New Moon Shevat 18 Tuesday New Moon Shevat, 1st day 19 Wednesday New Moon Shevat, 2nd day 20 Thursday New Moon Shevat, 3rd day 21 Friday New Moon Shevat, 4th day 22 Saturday New Moon Shevat, 5th day 23 Sunday New Moon Shevat, 6th day 24 Monday New Moon Shevat, 7th day 25 Tuesday New Moon Shevat, 8th day 26 Wednesday New Moon Shevat, 9th day 27 Thursday New Moon Shevat, 10th day 28 Friday New Moon Shevat, 11th day 29 Saturday New Moon Shevat, 12th day 30 Sunday New Moon Shevat, 13th day 31 Monday New Moon Shevat, 14th day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
February 15 Tuesday New Moon Adar, 1st day 16 Wednesday New Moon Adar, 2nd day 17 Thursday New Moon Adar, 3rd day 18 Friday New Moon Adar, 4th day 19 Saturday New Moon Adar, 5th day 20 Sunday New Moon Adar, 6th day 21 Monday New Moon Adar, 7th day 22 Tuesday New Moon Adar, 8th day 23 Wednesday New Moon Adar, 9th day 24 Thursday New Moon Adar, 10th day 25 Friday New Moon Adar, 11th day 26 Saturday New Moon Adar, 12th day 27 Sunday New Moon Adar, 13th day 28 Monday New Moon Adar, 14th day 29 Tuesday New Moon Adar, 15th day 30 Wednesday New Moon Adar, 16th day 31 Thursday New Moon Adar, 17th day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
March 1 Wednesday Pushan Nisan 2 Thursday New Moon Nisan 3 Friday First Day of Pesach 4 Saturday Second Day of Pesach 5 Sunday Third Day of Pesach 6 Monday Fourth Day of Pesach 7 Tuesday Fifth Day of Pesach 8 Wednesday Sixth Day of Pesach 9 Thursday Seventh Day of Pesach 10 Friday Eighth Day of Pesach 11 Saturday Ninth Day of Pesach 12 Sunday Tenth Day of Pesach 13 Monday Eleventh Day of Pesach 14 Tuesday Twelfth Day of Pesach 15 Wednesday Thirteenth Day of Pesach 16 Thursday Fourteenth Day of Pesach 17 Friday Fifteenth Day of Pesach 18 Saturday Sixteenth Day of Pesach 19 Sunday Seventeenth Day of Pesach 20 Monday Eighteenth Day of Pesach 21 Tuesday Nineteenth Day of Pesach 22 Wednesday Twentieth Day of Pesach 23 Thursday Twenty-first Day of Pesach 24 Friday Twenty-second Day of Pesach 25 Saturday Twenty-third Day of Pesach 26 Sunday Twenty-fourth Day of Pesach 27 Monday Twenty-fifth Day of Pesach 28 Tuesday Twenty-sixth Day of Pesach 29 Wednesday Twenty-seventh Day of Pesach 30 Thursday Twenty-eighth Day of Pesach 31 Friday Twenty-ninth Day of Pesach	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
April 1 Wednesday Twentieth Day of Nisan 2 Thursday Twenty-first Day of Nisan 3 Friday Twenty-second Day of Nisan 4 Saturday Twenty-third Day of Nisan 5 Sunday Twenty-fourth Day of Nisan 6 Monday Twenty-fifth Day of Nisan 7 Tuesday Twenty-sixth Day of Nisan 8 Wednesday Twenty-seventh Day of Nisan 9 Thursday Twenty-eighth Day of Nisan 10 Friday Twenty-ninth Day of Nisan 11 Saturday Thirtieth Day of Nisan 12 Sunday First Day of Iyar 13 Monday Second Day of Iyar 14 Tuesday Third Day of Iyar 15 Wednesday Fourth Day of Iyar 16 Thursday Fifth Day of Iyar 17 Friday Sixth Day of Iyar 18 Saturday Seventh Day of Iyar 19 Sunday Eighth Day of Iyar 20 Monday Ninth Day of Iyar 21 Tuesday Tenth Day of Iyar 22 Wednesday Eleventh Day of Iyar 23 Thursday Twelfth Day of Iyar 24 Friday Thirteenth Day of Iyar 25 Saturday Fourteenth Day of Iyar 26 Sunday Fifteenth Day of Iyar 27 Monday Sixteenth Day of Iyar 28 Tuesday Seventeenth Day of Iyar 29 Wednesday Eighteenth Day of Iyar 30 Thursday Nineteenth Day of Iyar 31 Friday Twentieth Day of Iyar	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
May 1 Tuesday First Day of Sivan 2 Wednesday Second Day of Sivan 3 Thursday Third Day of Sivan 4 Friday Fourth Day of Sivan 5 Saturday Fifth Day of Sivan 6 Sunday Sixth Day of Sivan 7 Monday Seventh Day of Sivan 8 Tuesday Eighth Day of Sivan 9 Wednesday Ninth Day of Sivan 10 Thursday Tenth Day of Sivan 11 Friday Eleventh Day of Sivan 12 Saturday Twelfth Day of Sivan 13 Sunday Thirteenth Day of Sivan 14 Monday Fourteenth Day of Sivan 15 Tuesday Fifteenth Day of Sivan 16 Wednesday Sixteenth Day of Sivan 17 Thursday Seventeenth Day of Sivan 18 Friday Eighteenth Day of Sivan 19 Saturday Nineteenth Day of Sivan 20 Sunday Twentieth Day of Sivan 21 Monday Twenty-first Day of Sivan 22 Tuesday Twenty-second Day of Sivan 23 Wednesday Twenty-third Day of Sivan 24 Thursday Twenty-fourth Day of Sivan 25 Friday Twenty-fifth Day of Sivan 26 Saturday Twenty-sixth Day of Sivan 27 Sunday Twenty-seventh Day of Sivan 28 Monday Twenty-eighth Day of Sivan 29 Tuesday Twenty-ninth Day of Sivan 30 Wednesday Thirtieth Day of Sivan 31 Thursday First Day of Tamuz	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
June 1 Monday New Moon Tamuz, 1st day 2 Tuesday New Moon Tamuz, 2nd day 3 Wednesday New Moon Tamuz, 3rd day 4 Thursday New Moon Tamuz, 4th day 5 Friday New Moon Tamuz, 5th day 6 Saturday New Moon Tamuz, 6th day 7 Sunday New Moon Tamuz, 7th day 8 Monday New Moon Tamuz, 8th day 9 Tuesday New Moon Tamuz, 9th day 10 Wednesday New Moon Tamuz, 10th day 11 Thursday New Moon Tamuz, 11th day 12 Friday New Moon Tamuz, 12th day 13 Saturday New Moon Tamuz, 13th day 14 Sunday New Moon Tamuz, 14th day 15 Monday New Moon Tamuz, 15th day 16 Tuesday New Moon Tamuz, 16th day 17 Wednesday New Moon Tamuz, 17th day 18 Thursday New Moon Tamuz, 18th day 19 Friday New Moon Tamuz, 19th day 20 Saturday New Moon Tamuz, 20th day 21 Sunday New Moon Tamuz, 21st day 22 Monday New Moon Tamuz, 22nd day 23 Tuesday New Moon Tamuz, 23rd day 24 Wednesday New Moon Tamuz, 24th day 25 Thursday New Moon Tamuz, 25th day 26 Friday New Moon Tamuz, 26th day 27 Saturday New Moon Tamuz, 27th day 28 Sunday New Moon Tamuz, 28th day 29 Monday New Moon Tamuz, 29th day 30 Tuesday New Moon Tamuz, 30th day 31 Wednesday New Moon Tamuz, 31st day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
July 12 Wednesday New Moon Av 13 Thursday New Moon Av, 1st day 14 Friday New Moon Av, 2nd day 15 Saturday New Moon Av, 3rd day 16 Sunday New Moon Av, 4th day 17 Monday New Moon Av, 5th day 18 Tuesday New Moon Av, 6th day 19 Wednesday New Moon Av, 7th day 20 Thursday New Moon Av, 8th day 21 Friday New Moon Av, 9th day 22 Saturday New Moon Av, 10th day 23 Sunday New Moon Av, 11th day 24 Monday New Moon Av, 12th day 25 Tuesday New Moon Av, 13th day 26 Wednesday New Moon Av, 14th day 27 Thursday New Moon Av, 15th day 28 Friday New Moon Av, 16th day 29 Saturday New Moon Av, 17th day 30 Sunday New Moon Av, 18th day 31 Monday New Moon Av, 19th day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate
August 10 Thursday New Moon Elul, 1st day 11 Friday New Moon Elul, 2nd day 12 Saturday New Moon Elul, 3rd day 13 Sunday New Moon Elul, 4th day 14 Monday New Moon Elul, 5th day 15 Tuesday New Moon Elul, 6th day 16 Wednesday New Moon Elul, 7th day 17 Thursday New Moon Elul, 8th day 18 Friday New Moon Elul, 9th day 19 Saturday New Moon Elul, 10th day 20 Sunday New Moon Elul, 11th day 21 Monday New Moon Elul, 12th day 22 Tuesday New Moon Elul, 13th day 23 Wednesday New Moon Elul, 14th day 24 Thursday New Moon Elul, 15th day 25 Friday New Moon Elul, 16th day 26 Saturday New Moon Elul, 17th day 27 Sunday New Moon Elul, 18th day 28 Monday New Moon Elul, 19th day 29 Tuesday New Moon Elul, 20th day 30 Wednesday New Moon Elul, 21st day 31 Thursday New Moon Elul, 22nd day	 Fig, Olive, Citron, Almond, Pomegranate

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believer—a true believer—in Presidential power. He seems to make no allowance whatever for the possibility that a President may sometimes be wrong and a civil servant sometimes right. . . .

It is conceivable that more reporters would content themselves with the output of government information officers (instead of seeking out congenial, policy-level officials), if those officers were themselves better informed or more informative. Unhappily, it has been my experience that far too often government information officers are under instructions to conceal, to shade the truth, sometimes to lie outright. They do this not because they are evil men but because their principals want it that way; and the first of those principals is the President. So I would suggest to Mr. Moynihan that if he wants to cut down the traffic in stolen goods, as he chooses to call it, let him try to persuade the next President he works for to upgrade the whole business of public information. . . .

Mr. Moynihan seems to me on more solid ground in his fourth and fifth propositions. I readily concede that far too often what passes in the American press for objective reporting amounts to printing or broadcasting perfectly preposterous statements, some of them downright scurrilous, because a particular public man or public group has said them; all this without examining too closely into the truth of what is said. This seems to me just as reprehensible whether the public man happens to be the late Senator Joe McCarthy . . . or the San Francisco lawyer representing the Black Panthers, whose unverified charge that twenty-eight Panthers had been murdered, in a conspiracy between the Justice Department and local police across the country, was published time and again as if it were hard fact by major and minor news media. They went on publishing it, I might add, until Edward Jay Epstein looked into the facts for himself and exploded the myth in the *New Yorker*. Nor was the mistake corrected in most publications I have read, even after the Epstein piece appeared. Which goes to bear out Mr. Moynihan's fifth point: that the press, if it wants to be taken seriously as a profession, must learn to acknowledge its mistakes. . . . The effect would be to increase, rather than diminish, respect for the press.

I could enumerate other sins of the news media, producing perhaps a longer list than Mr. Moynihan, but the main question that must be faced is: To what extent have modern Presidents contributed by word and deed to the very lack of confidence in Presidential power so understandably deplored by Mr. Moynihan? He acknowledges that the immediate answer may be Vietnam. Fair enough. And that, I would submit, is a matter of greater moment than the life styles of Washington correspondents or the self-seeking of minor bureaucrats. It is possible to trace back the widening distrust of Presidential power to the U-2 affair in 1960, when President Eisenhower, on the eve of a summit conference, was caught in a clumsy lie to the effect that it was just a weather plane on a routine mission that had somehow strayed over Soviet territory through a navigational error. Senator Fulbright, speaking at Yale a few months ago, dated the erosion of public confidence all the way back to Franklin Roosevelt's destroyers-for-bases deal with Britain in 1940. It continued—Fulbright contends—through Harry Truman's intervention in Korea and finally crumbled during Lyndon Johnson's escalation of an undeclared, unwanted, seemingly endless war in Vietnam.

A President who acts without explicit Congressional consultation or approval does so on the ground that the situation is so dangerous, so very urgent, that he cannot take the time to comply with established constitutional practices. The truth inevitably suffers in situations of this sort. A President who feels that he cannot afford to be candid with the Congress is not likely to share his thoughts with the people through the press. Moreover, he is powerfully tempted—and sometimes succumbs to that temptation—to use his enormous personal leverage with publishers or network presidents in order to protect the official secret. John F. Kennedy, for one, came to believe after the disaster at the Bay of Pigs that the publisher of the *New York Times* would have performed an enormous national service by printing everything the *Times* knew about the preparations for that fiasco, which was considerable. Had the *Times* stuck to its guns, in effect telling the President to mind his own business, as Kennedy said

later, it would have spared him and the American people an enormous humiliation. . . .

What I am trying to suggest, of course, is that recent Presidents have in a sense themselves created and nurtured that hostility to power which Mr. Moynihan discerns by behaving as if every unpleasant situation round the world, no matter how small, remote, or marginal, were Armageddon. I am thoroughly familiar with the argument that in certain limited situations—the big nuclear war that we have been wise or lucky enough to deter for all these years—there might well be no time for consultation. But the wars we have fought since 1945 were conventional wars, in which the argument for instantaneous decision-making seemed to me less than compelling.

The kinds of nasty situations we have been sucked into till now—and could be again in the 70's—did not in fact entail that cataclysmic confrontation with Soviet power against which we have been arming for the past twenty years and more. Surely the time is long past due for a return to constitutional processes. I can think of no single step better calculated to repair and restore Presidential authority.

Until that happy day, however, the press has no choice, it seems to me, but to show a decent skepticism with regard even to Presidential pronouncements. Let White House reporters, by all means, tell the country what the President has to say about Indochina, or the cost of living, or segregation in suburbia. But let them never confuse a Presidential statement with the whole truth. . . .

That decent skepticism I call for may not please the President, the Vice President, or the men around them. But it is not now, and never has been, the proper role of the American press to clap hands for any President or party.

ELIE ABEL

Graduate School of Journalism
Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan proves that the bureaucracy is disloyal to the President simply by asserting that this is the case. As an elderly former bureaucrat with some thirty-one years of federal service, and as the former Executive Director of the President's Advisory Coun-

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new American army?

For people who wonder about youth—It's not all happening in California. There are kids who "don't give a damn" in Bulgaria (Sofia's *Narodna Mladezh*); kids who live the "comfy life" in a Swiss commune (Zürich's *Die Weltwoche*); kids who barter blue jeans in Russia (Moscow's *Novy Mir* and London's *New Society*); and, yes, even a few "effete snobovitches" in Czechoslovakia (Prague's *Rude Pravo*) . . .

For book, film and theater nuts—You could have ordered tickets to "Sleuth" before the scalpers heard the news; you'd have known about "The Conformist" and "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion" before the lines started forming—to say nothing of the Soviet version of "The Graduate", and other topics the U.S. press may never pick up . . .

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cil on Executive Organization, I would suggest that Mr. Moynihan suffers from the syndrome of the district attorney who sees only the scruffy side of life and comes to believe that all of life is that way. What we have, of course, is occasional disloyalty to the President. Mr. Moynihan describes the condition, which does exist, but he does not see that it exists infrequently, and he therefore libels a much-abused and, on the whole, loyal and useful group of people.

The real difficulty is that no administration in my memory has known how to motivate the bureaucracy. Nor have they tried. Each administration, reinforced by the prejudices of people like Mr. Moynihan on the Left as well as many others on the Right, approaches the bureaucrat gingerly and with suspicion. In point of fact, the vast majority of bureaucrats are anxious to be loyally involved in policy-making and policy-implementing, and would give liberally and freely of their talents if they had an opportunity to do so.

MURRAY COMAROW
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan . . . states that such "annual theatricals" as those put on by the Legislative Correspondents in Albany and the Gridiron in Washington are, to his knowledge, unknown anywhere else in the world. . . . But they are not in fact peculiar to the United States.

In Ottawa, the Parliamentary Press Gallery puts on each year (and has been doing so apparently since about 1867) a presentation markedly similar to that of the Gridiron, not quite so glossy perhaps, but in its own way no less authentic. At Queen's Park in Toronto, the seat of the Ontario government, the press mounts annually a presentation in the same spirited genre.

It may be a North American phenomenon.

RICHARD O'HAGAN
Canadian Embassy
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Contrary to the image of infallibility and moral unimpeachability spokesmen for the print and broadcast journalists attempt to project . . . whenever they smell a breath of criticism, newspaper, television, and radio editors, re-

porters, and commentators are no more highly motivated than the members of any other profession. They are possessed of the same qualities, high or low, as run-of-the-mill humans in other pursuits. And unlike those in many other professions from plumbing to politicking, the journalist needs no license, takes no "oath of office" before foisting himself upon an unsuspecting public innocently conditioned, too often, to regard him as a paragon of sorts. His college major or graduate degree in journalism, if he has one, is no assurance of excellence or honesty in practice, as recruiters for major media have learned after years of scouring the campuses for talent. . . .

H. T. ROWE
Ridgewood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The ominous implications of Daniel P. Moynihan's broadside and his anti-press remarks give scholastic weight but not merit to the Agnew-type distrust of journalism that is all too rampant in this country.

I take issue with his comment that the new breed, if indeed there be one, of journalists represents in its work "attitudes genuinely hostile to American society and American government." There are some segments of American society that welcome informed skepticism and an enlightened outlook in the press.

If it were not for enterprising journalists, new breed or old, such pretty occurrences as My Lai would not have come to light. . . .

JOANN C. CAZDEN
Lexington, Kentucky

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a member of the "Liberal Audience"—Jewish, college professor, forty-years-old—I must say "Amen, Amen" to Daniel P. Moynihan's article.

There is, however, one glaring omission and that is the consequences, if the news media—press, radio, and television—fail to put their house in order. Although the liberal press doesn't like to think of the consequences of its own failings, some future governmental actions might be:

1) Government-sponsored newspapers for internal and external dissemination of facts, positions, and propaganda. My recollection is that the Nixon administration has already begun this internal news coverage and may expand the

distribution of its "newspaper."

2) Development and growth of "semi-official" newspapers which will receive preferential treatment of government news material.

3) Government-sponsored radio and television stations and networks similar to the British system.

4) Federal Trade Commission anti-trust suits against the news media requiring divestiture of newspaper ownership of radio and television stations or newspaper chains.

5) Denial of relicensing privileges for radio and television stations by the Federal Communications Commission, thereby permitting new competition to enter the news field in local areas. . . .

A credibility gap already exists between the public and the news media, and when it widens, it may never be bridged. . . .

WILLIAM MAZEL
Norfolk, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan, for reasons of his own, does not seem to differentiate daily reportage from feature stories and editorials or magazine articles. The latter often require extensive research and are written anywhere from several days to several weeks before they are printed (even months in the case of magazines), while the usual newspaper headline story frequently is written in a race against time to meet a deadline. Inaccuracies and distortions—through cutting and editing and printing errors—can be maddening to the journalist, as I can attest by my own experience. . . .

It is an amazing coincidence that though Mr. Moynihan has left the Nixon administration, his attack on journalists and newspapers—specifically the *New York Times*—should have come at exactly the same time as Mr. Agnew's remarkable speech in Boston against the news media and especially against CBS. . . .

Considering Mr. Moynihan's experience with the press, it seems hard to believe that he has not yet understood that the basic goal of newspapers in the United States is to capture the reader with sensational headlines. News is what is different and exciting, and the larger the headline, the more extraordinary the news, the more papers will be sold. Instead of "muckraking," as Mr. Moynihan calls it, would he have journalists write only about what is good news?

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Does he think, like Mr. Nixon, that just saying the economy is fine will make it so? . . .

One reason for the present disillusionment is . . . that many people today are much better informed than ever before and they cannot be fooled all of the time. . . .

What Mr. Moynihan deplores, I applaud: that there are young people around who spend the time to learn the truth about politics and politicians and about the system and the methods employed to "get ahead" in the U.S., especially in politics and in the world dominated by the U.S. . . .

There are very few people indeed who will pay any attention to the kind of percentages with which Mr. Moynihan finds such fault. I should be amazed that any of the figures quoted and disputed by Mr. Moynihan are at all meaningful except to a handful of experts. Not that, as a journalist, I should want to stand accused of defending sloppy research or misquotations. However, I would say that by and large, and judging from first-hand experience, the impressions conveyed by the reportage which Mr. Moynihan criticizes . . . are, unfortunately, largely correct. . . .

I don't think it necessary to rebuke the *New York Times* or any other major city newspaper for printing these facts (even if they are marred at times by incorrect details): that the Nixon administration has caused a major setback to civil rights, to all blacks in particular, in every area but specifically in employment. . . . And this is the key to Mr. Moynihan's argument and the key to the credibility gap of the Nixon administration—that it is failing to support civil rights with the necessary conviction and commitment . . . not only in the name of the blacks and minorities, but in the name of decency of all the American people. . . .

FRAN P. HOSKEN
Lexington, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Despite nearly two hundred years of contrary evidence, topped by two decades of further enhancement of Presidential power, Daniel P. Moynihan is attempting to propagate the novel notion that the press is now mightier than the President and that this is bad for democracy.

The dangers of Presidential news management have been "exaggerated," says Mr. Moynihan. The techniques, the media, and

the Presidency itself have changed over nearly two centuries, but Presidential attempts to "manage" the news—to restrict it, to distort it, to interpret it, to leak it, to delay or expedite it, to suppress it, and to punish or reward its purveyors—have not varied. Press fears of government control have been well grounded.

Conceding that the cold war and Vietnam "entailed a massive deception of the American people by their government," Mr. Moynihan blithely implies that Presidential involvement in undeclared wars and lies about the war are essential to "responsible" American democracy, while press exposure of the lies is evil. The possibility of Presidential error—in unrestricted bombing, in the Tonkin Gulf confusion, in the invasion of Cambodia and Laos—is not even considered.

To avoid dealing with the "charge" that the Nixon administration's news-management attempts have surpassed tolerable limits, Mr. Moynihan contends that the issue is not "the reputation of a particular President," but "what is seen to be at stake, and by the Presidents themselves, is the reputation of government, especially, of course, Presidential government. These are different matters, and summon a different order of concern."

How convenient to have what is at stake defined for the press and the public "by the Presidents themselves." One need not examine the news-management attempts of a particular President; one must only look at the struggle of all Presidents to get an occasional word in the press!

Even on the higher ground he has thus chosen to defend, Presidential government, Mr. Moynihan is, nevertheless, shaky.

Attempting to show that the press is ascendant over the President, Mr. Moynihan contends that the modern President is frequently disabled from acting because Washington reporters write news "leaked" from federal bureaucrats "antagonistic to Presidential interest." He is wrong on several counts.

As a federal bureaucrat for the past decade, my experience is that the Washington press depends too heavily on official press releases, briefings, and deliberate "leaks" from the administration in power and seldom seeks out sub-surface news. The occasional unauthorized "leak" drops gently in the bucket

of administration snake-oil. The system rewards bureaucrats who "don't rock the boat," not the rare maverick who "blows the whistle" on illegal or unwise administration actions or proposals.

Moreover, "leaks," as Mr. Moynihan concedes, are primarily of interest to a few national newspapers, not to the 30-second TV newscast. In the past decade, TV has become the primary means of political communication in America. This has increased, not diluted, Presidential dominance.

Minimizing not only the revolution in the mass media, but also the evolution of the Presidency itself, Mr. Moynihan argues that the power of the modern President has been overstated in the textbooks written since FDR. . . .

The "textbook" President is real, not fictional. He can wipe out life on this planet by a single command, and he can direct men walking on the moon or in outer space. He can commit up to three million troops to war anywhere on this globe without prior consultation with Congress, without an attack on the U.S., and without an emergency requiring immediate action. He has vast discretion in executing the nation's laws, and he has a retinue and palaces throughout the land surpassing that of any previous ruler.

Moreover, his constitutional and customary roles make the contemporary President the greatest newsmaker in the land. As a leader of his party, as head of state, as Commander-in-Chief, as foreign-policy maker and executor, as chief of the bureaucracy and law administrator, the President is news, and the success of his policies will frequently depend on how successfully he conveys to the public his own view of his acts, words, and thoughts. . . .

Most dangerous of all, however, is Mr. Moynihan's adjuration of the press to reject "objectivity." The press has "been open to equally false assertions—mirror images of McCarthyism indeed—during the period of Vietnam," says Mr. Moynihan. Presumably, the press should decide who is lying—McCarthy, SDS, Secretary Laird, etc.—and not print anything they say—or bury it inside the paper where it won't be read. This is equivalent to the Nazi-Communist-New Left tactic of condemning the man (McCarthy, Nixon, etc.) and thereafter discrediting or ignoring everything he

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says—even if he happens to be right occasionally. If the press made a habit of not printing what it thought to be lies about Vietnam, as Mr. Moynihan suggests, much of what the administration has released would be suppressed. Such a return to the partisan political press of the early American nation would destroy a free press, endanger the people's right to make up their own minds about who is lying, and truly threaten our democratic government.

HARRY KRANZ
Bethesda, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his excellent and, I hope, provocative article Daniel P. Moynihan writes: "The final, and by far the most important, circumstance of American journalism relevant to this discussion is the absence of a professional tradition of self-correction."

The concomitant deficiency in government today, unfortunately, seems to be the absence of "responsibility," in the narrower parliamentary sense of the word. That is, simply, a twofold tradition of 1) speaking and acting truthfully and 2) acknowledging mistakes and accepting the consequences. . . .

There is no such tradition of responsibility in American politics. . . . In our case, the "tradition," if one can glorify it with such a word, is increasingly coming to be one of government infallibility, of the big cover-up. More and more we witness the department head, bureau chief, or press officer with the ready denial that a mistake has occurred, that a judgment was faulty, that a program was anything less than a success. . . .

ROBERT M. JOHNSTONE, JR.
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan's article and Norman Podhoretz's comments on it ["Adversaries or Critics?," Issues, March] do much to illuminate an increasingly serious situation. I believe, however, that an additional factor is in danger of being ignored: freedom of the press does not mean freedom to acquire and abuse monopoly power contrary to the public interest.

That the New York *Times*, for example, both possesses and misuses such power can hardly be doubted. And it seems equally clear that these phenomena may be attributed largely to the demise of

the New York *Herald Tribune*, which formerly provided effective competition.

What certain news media in this country have to fear is not efforts by government to limit their freedom of expression, but efforts to achieve true freedom of the press by limiting monopoly power.

RICHARD V. CLEMENCE
Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Both Daniel P. Moynihan and Norman Podhoretz in his column seem to me to be too kind to the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*. There is plenty of evidence that these papers are far from possessing the objectivity which the two authors attribute to them.

Mr. Moynihan himself gives two instances of inaccurate reporting by the *Times* which, left uncorrected, suggest at least a less than complete commitment to objectivity. Edward Jay Epstein, in his article on the Black Panthers in the New Yorker, provides another example of inaccurate reporting by both papers, which reflects an absence of great zeal in checking statements made by obviously partisan sources. An old-fashioned reporter would have known that careful checking of statements from all sources is essential for objective reporting. Any critical reader of the two papers could supply many additional examples of the omission of relevant facts that might cast doubt on the truth as the reporter saw it; of slanted use of language; and of pseudo-objectivity. . . .

CICELY A. RYSPAN
Washington, D.C.

DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN writes:

Mencken is said to have replied to the better part of his correspondence with a printed postcard that read simply: "Dear Sir or Madam, You may be right." He had had his say; they had had theirs. There is a journalistic equivalent of barratry, and we would all be wise to stay this side of it. I wrote "The Presidency & the Press," with the intent to raise certain issues. Caution may be the better term. I am persuaded by the response so far that it was useful to have done so. I have had a considerable personal correspondence, the article has been widely reprinted, editorialists and columnists have approved or disapproved, or a little of both. The correspondence now published in

COMMENTARY strikes me as representative of the general reaction.

Max Frankel states his case forcefully and well. Let us consider this argument begun, and hope that others will carry it forward. Let me deal only with the points of accuracy which he raises.

The *Times* story on black employment in the federal government reported blacks to be 12.9 per cent of the population. There is no such statistic. I, for my part, made the mistake of using the census statistic for "non-whites," which is 12.4 per cent, a proportion higher than that for blacks as such, which is, as Mr. Frankel states, 11.2 per cent. All this says to me is that the *Times* story was even more inaccurate than I depicted it. I don't think he need have described as "scoffing" my observation that this kind of mix-up is "routinely" made by all of us. It is. That is why, as they used to say, pencils have erasers. The fact is that Negro Americans represent a considerably larger proportion of the federal work force than they do of the population. They are not so well represented in the upper reaches, but as Nathan Glazer has recently pointed out, this situation too is improving. (Almost half the graduates of black colleges now enter government employment.) I regard this as altogether a good thing, and would hope to see the proportions even greater than they are. But I do not like to read in the New York *Times* that just the opposite situation obtains and that perhaps quotas are the answer.

With respect to federal aid to black colleges, I feel that Mr. Frankel misreads me. I made no objection—I make none—to the fact that Robert Semple did not report the White House announcement of July 23 that aid was being increased to these institutions. I make no objection to the wholly inaccurate statement in the next to last paragraph, on page 33, of the Brown story that HEW aid had been increased by \$120 million, rather than to \$120 million. Moreover, I accept Mr. Frankel's point that what is news is not necessarily truth. My view would be that the *Times* could well have ignored the whole sequence of statements and events. However, it is the fact that the first prominence of any kind given to the subject was a front-page story in which Dr. Vivian Henderson, president of an important university and a member of the board of trustees of the Ford Foundation, is

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depicted as denouncing the incumbent administration in threatening, even abusive terms. The next day Dr. Henderson categorically denied having said anything of the kind. Moreover, the objective facts would be that had he said it he would have been wrong. The Washington *Post* reporting the same event (using the Los Angeles *Times* wire service) made no mention of any such statement. It seems to me that in the circumstances Dr. Henderson's denial should have been printed. The *Times* would have had every right to accompany his letter with a statement of its own. I fully accept that public persons are always wishing they had not been accurately quoted and denying that they were. Were the press to fill up with such denials we might all lose our bearings. On the other hand, I believe there are exceptions. Dr. Henderson in effect gave his word as a gentleman that he had not said what the *Times* stated he had said. That imposed upon the *Times* a gentleman's obligation to acknowledge the charge.

Elie Abel's remarks are worth reading. He describes me as a believer in Presidential power, which, within limits, I am. So was John F. Kennedy, whom I first served in Washington. It is a respectable constitutional position, with which some will differ. However, I do not need to be lectured about the destroyer-naval base deal. I cited it in my article, and have a fair scholarly acquaintance with the details of the matter. Nor do I fancy the allusion—"true believer"—to Eric Hoffer's disquisition on the totalitarian mind. I would remind Elie Abel that he is now an academic dean at Columbia University, and that there are standards of disputation in such places.

I am much in Richard O'Hagan's debt for word of the theatricals in Ottawa. I would suppose these to be the oldest of any now continuing. Will *no one* collect and publish the lyrics of these fascinating occasions? Will he?

I will stop. Richard V. Clemence raises a serious issue about which, hopefully, he will write more. Does Mr. Kranz really think any American President "can commit up to three million troops to war anywhere on this globe without prior consultation with Congress, without an attack on the U.S., and without an emergency. . . ." One President got almost as far as six hundred thousand, but that is the record as best as I can tell. Anyway, we don't

have three million troops. Fran P. Hosken charges that I have "not yet understood that the basic goal of newspapers in the United States is to capture the reader with sensational headlines." She is right.

Lindbergh

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have but one fault to find with the excellent review by Louis Berg of *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* [Books in Review, February]. In that review Mr. Berg asks: "Does all this make Lindbergh a Nazi?" and then answers the question in the negative.

That Lindbergh ever joined an active Nazi group is highly unlikely. However, that he openly displayed a sympathy for Nazism is not to be doubted. For example:

- He was a disciple of Lawrence Dennis, the intellectual spokesman for fascism in America.

- He collaborated with and was a disciple of Alexis Carrel, who also espoused fascist principles.

- Without objection from him or any indication that he was in disagreement, his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wrote and published a book-length poem entitled *The Wave of the Future*. In this book the Wave of the Future was fascism and the atrocities were merely the froth on the wave.

- In the early 30's, at the New School, I heard a debate between Lawrence Dennis, who spoke for fascism, and an American Communist whose name escapes me. Both agreed on one thing: democracy was finished and each individual was compelled to make a choice between fascism and Communism. It was apparent from his words and deeds that Lindbergh agreed with both of these speakers that democracy was dead, and that faced with a choice between fascism and Communism, he would choose fascism.

- Lindbergh evidenced his lack of confidence in democracy in many ways. To cite one instance: in urging this country to avoid becoming involved in the war against Nazi Germany, he said that for the democracies to win, it would be necessary for the United States to build at least 50,000 planes; that this could not be done by America, and that even if it were done, the planes could not be based in England. As a matter of fact, we built 100,000 planes and they were based in England.

What was the reason for Lindbergh's strong anti-democratic feeling? Was it because, as Mr. Berg points out, he despised the common people? Was it because, with justification, he resented the treatment he had received at the hands of the free press in democratic America? Was it because of some authoritarian strain in his make-up? Was it because of his hatred of Roosevelt? These questions, of course, are speculative and cannot be answered with assurance.

However, there were many others in America, France, and England of whom the same questions could be asked. The publication of Lindbergh's journals reminds us of what many have come to forget: that Hitler's near success was due in no small measure to the support he received from important segments of the population in the democratic countries.

IRVING M. ENGEL

New York City

LOUIS BERG writes:

I am grateful for Mr. Engel's kind praise of my review and it would be hard for me to disagree with his single demurral. If anyone wants to imply that Lindbergh is or was a fascist, I offer no strong objections. He supported native fascists in the America First movement, sought to further the expansionist aims of Nazi Germany, and if he had any reservation about the Nazi ideology it is not in evidence in his war diary. My own opinion is that he was too innocent of ideas to be capable of understanding, much less embracing, any particular ideology. His was the military mind, which has its own resemblance to fascist thought. At least, that is the point I sought to make. I was not unaware of Anne Lindbergh's writings, which undoubtedly influenced him. She too, I imagine, was riding the Wave of the Future, which unhappily for them both, but happily for the world, receded.

Research and a Report

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Herbert L. Packer's fair and judicious description of the astonishingly shoddy work of the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography ["The Pornography Caper," February] leaves me distressed, and at a loss to explain why competent and honorable scientists allowed their

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In many respects CITY's mission remains the same, but it has been given a new format and a broader scope. The latter is expressed in the subtitle "magazine of urban life and environment."

Thus, the term "urban" in the subtitle refers to urban, or urbanized, or metropolitan areas, rather than to central cities only.

Metropolitan areas have become the basic units of American life. The ways they have developed (and are developing), the ways they are governed, the resources and problem-solving capacities they command, importantly determine the quality of American life for nearly three-fourths of the nation's population.

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and state governments, population growth and movement.

Similarly, CITY's concerns extend beyond the present to the nation's increasingly urbanized future. One of its major concerns, in fact, is the process of urbanization itself: the ways, planned or unplanned, conserving or wasteful, healing or divisive, in which urban growth and development occur.

The term "environment" in the subtitle also is used broadly. It encompasses man's use (and abuse) of nature's resources, and the quality of what man builds, both of which will be given significant coverage in CITY; but it also encompasses many less tangible, less visible, but no less real influences on urban life. CITY will continue to point out that the nation's most pressing environmental crisis is in the urban slums and ghettos, and that it is compounded of such things as fear and social disorganization as well as littered streets, fetid air, and decayed housing.

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names to be associated with parodying "science." I also wish to add two points to those illuminated by Mr. Packer.

The Commission's data are not only irrelevant in the main, as Mr. Packer points out, but in some instances oddly selected and presented. Consider the effects (or non-effects) of the legitimization of pornography in Denmark. Pornographers were given their head, legally, in 1969. (For some five years before repeal, their stuff was quite available.) The Commission reports (p. 274, Table 33) that from 1958 to 1969 there was a 37.5 per cent decrease in reported rape in Copenhagen. On inspection that turns out to be a decrease from eleven cases (1958) to eight (1969). The intervening years, for reasons best known to the Commission, are not listed. It is known, however—at least to my students—that such small base figures cannot yield significant comparisons. More significant figures, for all of Denmark, were available for about the same period. Thus there were 189 reported rapes in 1962 and 217 in 1968; certainly no decrease. Can one trust the Commission's selection even of irrelevant data?

A few comments on method. 1) Crime rates alone (not crime) are significant. Otherwise there is a "crime wave," or a decrease, whenever the population increases, or decreases, or the age composition changes. 2) What could isolated sex-crime figures, even if they were correctly stated, possibly show about the effects of pornography? Exactly nothing. Suppose rape had increased (it did). There are many factors other than pornography which might account for the increase. (Has there been a general increase in crime rates in Denmark?, etc. etc.) Suppose rape had decreased. It might have decreased more if it were not for pornography. What bearing did the Commission imagine its data to have? 3) Suppose, now, that rape did decrease and that the decrease was shown to have been due to the more permissive climate of which pornography is a part—i.e., girls surrender so easily that they are seldom raped. Would the Commission expect us to greet this change with joy, or dismay? As an argument for, or against, legitimizing pornography?

Which brings me to the second, more general point. Its mandate required the Commission to study "the effects of pornography upon

the public . . . and its relationship to crime and other anti-social behavior" (emphasis added). But the Commission in effect limited itself to crime (and in a bizarre fashion). Nowhere did the Commission deal seriously with the main issue in the minds of everyone who reasonably objects to pornography: the effect of pornography on the quality of our lives, on the public and private *ethos*. The Commission pursued a marginal matter—pornography and crime, no, pornography and sex crime—instead of engaging the question: What influence might the legalization of pornography have on our traditions of public and private behavior; on the shared values, the empathy and mutual identification indispensable to organized society; on love, marriage, illegitimacy; on attitudes toward personal and social relationships?

Without "mutual ties," "emotional ties which hold the group together," there is, according to Freud, "the cessation of all feeling of consideration" and therewith "a gigantic and senseless dread"; according to almost all sociologists, there is also social disorganization. Now, one may argue about whether the legalization of pornography destroys these ties, and has a disorganizing effect. But the Commission ignored the question and thereby its own mandate. Thus it reached conclusions determined *a priori* by its odd formulation of the problem and by its curiously selected data. . . .

The dissenters charged the Commission with bias. Perhaps they were wrong: it might have been mere incompetence. No *mens rea*; just culpable neglect. I don't think the Commission would like this defense, but I can see no other.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

From the unnecessarily cute title to the gratuitously sexual and tasteless references to "hardware, or perhaps software" (in connection with the North Carolina study on the effects of erotica on male college students) to the quite illogical conclusion, the Packer Report on the Report not only is inadequate to its subject but is a real disservice to the cause of intellectual freedom.

A number of facts are misstated (some admittedly trivial, but still

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of importance in setting the general tone of the article):

1) Only someone without a sense of humor could possibly recognize *The Obscenity Report* (Stein and Day) to be anything but a satirically-intended hoax. It is full of completely and obviously faked charts, statistics, and quotations. . . .

2) ". . . the Government Printing Office printed just enough copies of the whole Report and the various dissents for the officials immediately involved. . . ." So says Mr. Packer. The fact is that the Government Printing Office had enough copies of the whole Report, including all the various dissents, to send them to the several hundred Government Depository Libraries throughout the United States early in December (1970), and copies were then and are now readily available from the Government Printing Office. . . .

3) The Senate rejected the Commission Report on October 13, 1970, thirteen days after the COP Report was issued—not on October 17, seventeen days later, as Mr. Packer states.

4) The Commission expenditures came to approximately \$1.8 million, which is considerably more than the "hundreds of thousands" mentioned by Mr. Packer as the cost of the Commission. . . .

The single most obviously "self-inflicted hotfoot"—to quote Mr. Packer's quote—in his Report on the Report is his admission of a "bias that research is the opiate of the behavioral scientists." Really Mr. Packer, this is 1971, and there is just too much clearly valuable and appropriate research by behavioral science on record to dismiss this study and its research so highhandedly or to deprecate *all* such research.

As a long-practicing academic librarian and a former long-time member of the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee, who is at present completing a book on the origins of censorship, may I attest to the fact that I find the Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography a pioneering, useful, and significant publication which, although like any man-made production, is far from perfect, still deserves a less biased and captious critique than the one presented in Mr. Packer's article.

ELI M. OBOLER

Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:
In "The Pornography Caper" Herbert L. Packer refers on several occasions to my critique of the Final Report of the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography.

I think it might be helpful to mention a few additional facts and events which Mr. Packer was not aware of at the time he wrote. . . .

For some years I have been keeping a file on the scientific evidence of pornography's potential effect on behavior and have participated in occasional symposia dealing with these issues, including a presentation before the Presidential Commission in Los Angeles on May 4, 1970.

The first confidential draft copy of the "Effects Panel Report," the heart of the whole Commission report, which was released to Commission members in July, asserted that the scientific evidence indicated that pornography did not have any ascertainable causal relationship to crime, juvenile delinquency, sexual deviance, or emotional disturbance. I was sent a copy of this report by a member of the Commission who wanted to know if this indeed were true. . . . Although I did not have access (until a month later) to the Commission's own privately-financed studies, I was able at this time to check their discussions against already published literature like the Kinsey-Gebhardt *et. al.* studies of sex offenders. A careful critique and analysis of the Commission's data and conclusions revealed a number of very serious flaws, gross inaccuracies in citing figures from other studies, and instances of not reporting data or evidence suggesting opposing views (e.g., that pornography might have some negative effects on the consumer). I sent a critical review of this report to the Commissioner. Several days later someone on the Commission, or on the Commission staff, released this report (in draft form and unapproved by the Commission) to the Associated Press, fearing perhaps that the Commission might later attempt to water it down or censor it. Some newspapers, like the Chicago *Daily News*, printed this draft report verbatim over a period of several weeks with the implication that honest scientific inquiry had demonstrated that pornography causes no harm. I was much concerned that a report such as this, badly flawed in so many ways, with significant

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evidence of major bias in its review of the scientific evidence, was released to the public with no disclaimers, and I wrote . . . to the chairman and all members of the Commission requesting that a panel of unbiased outside behavioral scientists be allowed to review the original research. . . . This letter was never answered and outside behavioral scientists were never allowed to review the evidence and ascertain the "honesty" of the report. (A promise, however, has been made to publish in a limited edition all of the Commission research at some later date.)

Several weeks later, Morton Hill, a member of the Commission, invited me to review all of the confidential Commission-financed studies which, together with the outside literature, constituted the scientific evidence on which the Commission made its recommendations for repealing nearly all laws controlling the exposure of adults and children to pornography.

By late August the Commission writers had almost totally rewritten their "Effects Panel Report," responding to almost every criticism raised in my original critique. But a careful review of the Final Report, which was published in September (and approved by the majority of the Commission), . . . revealed many new errors and inaccuracies in the reporting of research results as well as flawed methodology in many of the basic studies. . . .

From the evidence that I could gather it appears that no one on the Commission, including Chairman Lockhart, ever read all of the many volumes of the Commission's research studies. Moreover, since they were not scientists, they would not have been in a position to evaluate critically the soundness of methodology, the adequacy of statistical techniques used, etc.

Thus Commissioner G. William Jones's statement, defending his vote to repeal pornography laws, sounds hollow and ironic: "As a clergyman . . . I believe that the search for truth is liberating Although many religious persons may be distressed by the findings of our research, they must certainly rejoice that misconceptions and prejudices are being replaced by knowledge. . . ."

From what I can gather, Commissioner Jones and probably a number of the other Commission-

ers have been "led down the garden path" by the staff members who wrote the Report. Instead of being liberated by the truth, they have been taken. That this could happen under the aegis of a Presidential Commission suggests a very sad day for social-science research. If Commissioner Jones, Chairman Lockhart, or others on the Commission are indeed interested in the truth I would again suggest that a panel of unbiased social scientists be allowed to review the original research and ascertain what kinds of conclusions might legitimately be drawn from the data.

VICTOR B. CLINE
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

HERBERT L. PACKER replies:

I refer Mr. Oboler to Mr. van den Haag, except for Mr. Oboler's collection of trivia, which requires no answer. While I agree with what Mr. van den Haag says about the effect of pornography on the quality of our lives, I would ask him to consider how the law can be used to suppress pornography without causing more harm than what it suppresses. I'm afraid that it will be a long time before Mr. Cline and I have anything to say to each other.

The Good Old Days

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

How wonderful—the selections from the *Bintel Brief* ["Worthy Editor," March]. What glimpses they give us of a bygone age: bosses mistreating workers, men mistreating women, revolutionaries fighting oppression, Jews being persecuted and murdered, Jews losing their identity, Jewish girls looking for husbands, husbands deserting their families, policemen being brutal, etc., etc. Indeed, life was simple then! . . .

HANNA F. DESSER
New York City

Correction

In Rabbi Balfour Brickner's letter in the June issue, a line was unfortunately dropped from the third sentence in the first paragraph on page 8. The sentence should read: "In Judaism it is not uncommon to find the convert far more deeply committed to, and involved in, the practices of Jewish life than one who has lived for a lifetime 'within the *mishpocha*.'"—Ed.

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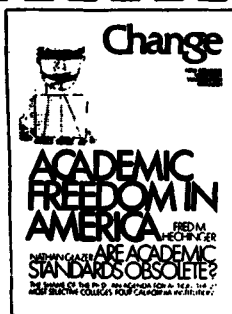
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An Apology for Literature

Paul Goodman

1.

STATEMENTS in literary works are taken seriously and men of letters are invited to confer with experts as if they had something useful to contribute. They are not scientific statements. They are grounded in something, but in what? It is not exactly evidence. What kind of statement is it that men of letters make? What is their warrant for making it? I think the warrant is in the literary process itself.

There are innumerable books on works of literature and the lives of their authors, and there are many books on the philosophy of art. But to my surprise, I cannot think of a comprehensive study of the literary process—what it is to write books—drawn from what men of letters do. Like language itself, literature easily attaches to any subject-matter, yet it is less free-floating than language; criticism deals with whole concrete works. (In this respect, literature is not like grammar, rhetoric, and logic, which are “universal arts,” as Aristotle called them, that are used for every purpose.) And literature has its own specific discipline, of writing the essay *through*, with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Let me spell out these characteristics of literature and compare them with other disciplines, and see if they add up to a warrant for stating anything meaningful and true.

Like everybody else, a writer has a day-to-day life; but unlike any scientist or almost any professional, a writer's daily life and course of life are relevant to his special work and may at any time appear in his sentences. He may say, “My experience has been that . . .” or “For instance, yesterday I had a quarrel with my daughter and . . .” I can think of only pastoral theology and psychotherapy as professions where this would not be out of place, since they deal face to face with their clients and speak *ad hominem*. If a social scientist uses such sentences he is at once identified as a writer (and dismissed).

A writer certainly does not deal *ad hominem* with his unknown readers; yet his readers may

take it as if he does and send him letters and so forth.

A writer objectively observes, and so is like a scientist. His method is best compared, in this respect, with natural history or anthropology. A young writer is well advised to learn the geography, botany, and animals—a good model is Hardy—as well as the people and institutions. A writer's method is naturalistic; he does not intervene experimentally or with questionnaires, though like other naturalists, he may station himself to notice what he needs to know.

But then, unlike scientific naturalists, he focuses on the individual case with its unique characteristics, like a painter painting just this scene, or a physician treating just this patient.

He brings together his personal life and the objective subject matter, and the general class and the individual case.

Writers rely heavily on memory, the mother of the muses, both their own biographies and the cultural tradition. Only law, philosophy, and history itself draw as much on records of the past decades, centuries, and millennia. The faculty of bringing together memory and learning with present observation and spontaneous impulse is a remarkable service for human beings. Man is the animal who makes himself and the one who is made by his culture. Literature repeats the meaning and revives the spirit of past makings, so they are not a dead weight, by using them again in a making that is occurring now.

I would not like to distinguish literature from philosophy, if we take philosophy to be the collecting of wide-flung concrete experience, in principle all the experience there is, and saying what is central in it. There are various methods of philosophizing, for instance logical analysis, phenomenological description, grounding and harmonizing the different sciences. Literature could be called philosophizing by making and experimenting with language.

Writers are linguistic analysts and know the folk wisdom and superstition that exist in common vocabulary and grammar. As general semanticists, they are critical of the rhetoric of the street, the mass media, and official institutions. They understand, more than most people, what cannot be said, what is not being said though it ought to be, what is verbalized experience, and

PAUL GOODMAN's most recent works include *New Reformation* and *People or Personnel*. The present piece has been adapted from his forthcoming book, *Speaking and Language*, which will be published by Random House early next year.

what is mere words. They can detect when there is really an idea and an argument rather than a cloud of phrases. They can date a passage and show a forgery. As psychologists of language they are sensitive to how people come on when they talk or write, the ploys they use, and the postures they strike. They can hear the personal character that is expressed in habits of syntax, and the personal inhibition or freedom that are told by the breathing and rhythm of sentences and the quality of metaphor. They can judge the clarity or confusion or spurious clarity in an exposition. They are sociologists of language and can recognize the social background in vocabulary, pronunciation, and routine formulas.

AT THE SAME time as they know all this, however, in their own writing they must let their speech come spontaneously; it is free speech, though they monitor it critically. It pursues tangents that they did not plan, produces metaphors that surprise them, uses word order with an emphasis they did not know they had, argues in a way to contradict their theses, and says ideas that they themselves judge to be unpolitical or immoral. But they do not censor or control this wildness, but do their best to assimilate it and keep going. Sometimes the whole must be torn up because it has fallen apart. For writers, these wildnesses are like the phenomena that must be "saved" by the empirical scientist. There are different ideologies to explain the necessity not to control—it is inspiration, it is unconscious contents emerging, the unconscious contents are the return of individual hang-ups, or they are images from the depths, the spontaneous is the voice of the people, or universal man speaking through the writer. Whatever the ideology, a writer writes at the boundary of what he knows.

Not to censor is an act of moral will, a commitment. At some point early in his career a young writer must come to it, like a kind of Hippocratic oath. If he can think something, he will say it; if it says itself, he will not strike it; if he can write it, he will publish it. The writing does not belong to "himself."* The refusal of censorship and self-censorship is, of course, essential for the use of writing against lying and oppressive regimes; but it also makes a writer a thorn in the side of his own political cause: he gets nice about the slogans, he can't say the half-truth, he states the case of the opposition better than is convenient, and so forth. A writer might be a fine citizen in a perfect community, to which he would lend animation; but he is an unreliable ally, he is "unrealistic," in actual politics.

The spontaneity, the free origination, of writing is one aspect of a writer's disinterestedness; he does not will it but he is present with it. The other aspect is as follows.

He writes it *through*, from the beginning

through the middle to the end. This is a writer's chief moral virtue, it is an act of will and often requires a lot of fortitude. It is what distinguishes a writer from a dilettante. A young writer is well advised to start on things he can finish and not get bogged down in long novels. By finishing, you learn the habits that work for you and can then set up a bigger structure.

To make a whole work, each sentence follows from the sentence before with "literary probability" and advances the whole, until nothing more follows. In the course of a fairly long work, there are bound to be impasses. The writer must backtrack and choose other alternatives, observe more, and sometimes have bad headaches till he invents something. Here lies the distinction between a good writer and a bad writer. A good writer does not fake it and try to make it appear, to himself or the reader, that there is a coherent and probable whole when there isn't. If the writer is on the right track, however, things fall serendipitously into place; his sentences prove to have more meaning and formative power than he expected; he has new insights; and the book "writes itself."

At the end of this process, somehow, the finished work will have been worth doing. If it is a long poem, it will have the kind of meaning that poems have. If it is a prose essay, it will say something true about its subject matter.†

This last is, of course, simply an act of faith, but it is no different in kind from the faith of all who work at the boundary of the unknown, the faith of a physician that, if he pursues his method, nature will heal the patient; or the faith of an empirical scientist that, if he pursues his method, the nature of things will reveal a secret. Or for that matter, the faith of a child who runs across a field and the ground supports him. If they fail, they do not give up the method, because they have no alternative way of being. When they

* An interesting problem arises with regard to copyright. In principle, what is authentically written is not a commodity bought and paid for, but is in the public domain like air and water and natural growth. Yet as a citizen I object to my writing being exploited for somebody's profit. So I try to set the following conditions: if anybody wants to reprint my writing for non-commercial purposes, they can do so gratis; if the State wants to use it, they must give me safeguards; if a commercial enterprise wants to use it, they must pay the going market price.

† Schopenhauer or Nietzsche—I no longer remember which; either is possible because both were snappish and down-to-earth—advises looking first at the last chapter and asking "Was will der Mensch?—What's the man after?" He is after where he ends up. But has he *gone* there? If so, you have to go the way with him. My own usual experience is that I do start out with him frankly on his way; but somewhere along he fakes something, or he doesn't know something that he ought to know; and then I find it hard to continue. My experience also is that one can usually easily recognize the writer who is really in there pitching, suffering, doing his best, finding new things—at least new to himself, and not just working a sewing machine. To him one allows any number of mistakes and gaps.

succeed, they get a passing satisfaction and go on to another work.

Finally there is an odd and revealing unilateral contract that a writer makes with his readers. Some writing, of course, like a political tract, an entertainment, or a popularization, is aimed at a particular audience and always keeps them in mind; but much serious writing, perhaps most, is written for no particular audience; and fiction and poetry for an "ideal" audience. Nevertheless, the writer is always under an obligation to make it "clear." He will explain references that an ordinary literate reader is not likely to know, he will fill out the argument, he will avoid private or clique information, even though his ideal audience would hardly need such help. But "clear" does not mean easily comprehensible—consider Mallarmé, an exceedingly clear and logical writer, but one who cannot sacrifice the conciseness, texture, and immediacy of his style just to be easily understood by readers, so you have to figure it out like a puzzle. My opinion is that, in most cases, the writer is not thinking of a reader at all; he makes it "clear" as a contract with *language*. Since it is the essence of speech to have a hearer—even though he intends no hearer—the correct use of speech is to be clear.

Let us go back to the question I started with. How do these traits and powers of literary writing add up to a warrant to make true statements, in the sense that scientific statements are true? They don't. *But there is no alternative.* There is no other discourse but literature that is subjective and objective, general and concrete, spontaneous and deliberate, and that, though it is just thinking aloud, gives so much attention to speech, our chief communication.

Philosophers have always quoted literary texts as if they provided another line of proof, a special kind of evidence. As a writer, I do not judge that I provide evidence. But I do go through the literary process to produce the text.

Men of letters have definite virtues. They do not wear blinders. They are honest and do not omit the seamy or awkward side. They are intolerant of censorship and skeptical of authority. They work hard to write it through. They disinterestedly lose themselves in what they do and are innocently in love with the product.

But it is not so definite what is the use of their ethic. They are not committed, like scientists, to find confirmable and replicable truth. Politically, they are usually inept at finding ways to realize what they advocate. They are not trustworthy as pedagogues or curers of souls.

Perhaps, in the social division of labor, they are the group to whom it is assigned to make sense. One is reminded of Nestor, the orator of the *Iliad*. Nestor's honeyed speech at no time dissuaded the Greeks from their infatuation, but it was no doubt a good thing for them to go to their doom with open eyes.

2.

IT HAS BEEN argued, however, that literature is simply outmoded in modern times. One clamorous line of attack has recently been coming from the champions of multi-media. In my opinion it is nonsensical. They say that writing, and indeed all speech, is "linear," it pays out its meanings one after another like signals in an unrolling tape. But in fact, speech can be amazingly contrapuntal, more so even than orchestral music with all its voices and timbres. In colloquial speech, the phonetics, grammar, and lexicon can simultaneously have meaning, either reinforcing or shading one another, and to these we must add non-verbal signs and attending to the respondent. Writing, which is more deliberate speech, lacks the non-verbal and the respondent, but it adds contrapuntal voices like a system of metaphor, systematic irony, allegory, subordination of clauses in the framework of an independent clause—consider a paragraph of Proust. In poetry it is usual for three systems of rhythm to be heard at the same time, the meter, the beats of phrasing, and the period or paragraph. Good colloquial conversation or the complex-word of a poem can keep globally in touch with almost every aspect of a situation.

Speech rises from within people; they reach out to say it or to hear it, even when they are reading. My observation is that people are rather passive to multi-media. Multi-media have their own quality, of surrounding the audience spatially and sometimes breaking down defenses, but they are not a substitute for saying. It is possible—I doubt it—that future technological and cultural changes may put writing and reading out of business, but other media will not then do the same job as words. It is hard, if at all possible, for non-verbal means to syllogize, define, state class-inclusion, subordinate, say a subjunctive or even imperative or interrogative, to distinguish direct and indirect discourse, to say I, Thou, or It, etc., etc. Film, music, and space-arrangements have to use indirect means to communicate these simple things. On this subject, people like McLuhan don't know what they're talking about, though they have other useful things to say. If they would try to write through a book, they would have to make more sense. A written argument won't hang together unless it copes with at least the obvious objections. Putting in a picture doesn't help.

A different objection is to deny that literature as such is relevant, to say that writing is made honest only by its workaday and community use. In its philosophical form, which I remember hearing during the 20's (e.g., *Gebrauchsmusik*), this is a profound doctrine. It is close to Goethe's great sentence that "Occasional Poetry is the highest kind"—the poetry of weddings, parties, funerals, and dedications. Street theater and *commedia dell'arte* are the utopia of every play-

wright. Music and plastic art—though literature less—have certainly flourished in service to religion. It is a doctrine of happy communities.

Since the 30's, however, and very much nowadays, the irrelevance of literature has gotten to mean that the right use of literary speech is political action, like protest songs and guerrilla theater—we simply don't have the community necessary for celebration, occasional poetry, and *commedia dell'arte*. That is, the process of literature is not used in its natural power to find meaning and make sense, so that we can act in a world that has meaning and sense. It is claimed there is no time for this, there is too much suffering and injustice. And only by engaging in revolutionary action can one produce new thought and lively words. But in practice I have found this comes to not questioning slogans that are convenient for an immediate tactic or a transient alliance. The writers tell half-truths. "Action" becomes idiotic activism. The vocabulary and grammar are pitched to a condescending populism, about at the level of junior high school, including the dirty words. The thought is ideological through and through.

THERE is, finally, a famous analysis of the history of poetry and human speech that in principle makes literature now quite irrelevant. On this view, poetry was the inevitable and appropriate speech of primitive ages, as the only available way of saying reality when not much was known and before the division of labor; these were ages of myth, when people living in a fearful and uncontrollable environment could not distinguish between magic and science, saga and history, dream and empirical experience; the poets were the prophets, historians, philosophers, and scientists. In the course of time, poetry was replaced by philosophy and history; and these in turn have given way to special physical sciences and positivist sociology. In our time, literature can be merely decoration or entertainment or exercises in emotional noises. This was the line of Vico (on one interpretation) and of Comte. And prophylactic empiricist languages, like Basic English or positivist logic, carry it out as a program.

Apologists for literature have tended to regard exactly the same development of language as a devolution rather than an evolution. In his *Defence of Poesy* Philip Sidney argues that history and moral philosophy are ineffectual to teach the man of action and the warrior—he comes on strongly as the Renaissance scholar-poet who is also soldier-statesman. History tells us only what has been, poetry what should be; moral philosophy is dry analysis, poetry motivates to emulation and action. Sidney would certainly not have been happier with the "value-neutral" language of present departments of sociology. In its high Italian form, Sidney's argument goes so far

as to deny that scientific or philosophical sentences are true at all; only Eloquence is true, for truth resides in right action, not in propositions, just as Nietzsche holds that the only true science is the *Gaya Scienza* that makes you happy if you know it.

Shelley, in his *Defence of Poetry*, takes the same tack. He sees the world of his time as fragmented, quantified, rule-ridden; it is only poetry that can liberate and bring the parts together.

We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know—our calculations have outrun our conceptions. . . . The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionately circumscribed that of the internal world. . . . The great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person. . . . A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively. . . . Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts.

In my opinion, there is a lot of truth in this—it is grounded in Coleridge's post-Kantian epistemology. It is odd, however, that as a philosophic anarchist after Godwin, Shelley should end his *Defence* with the fatuous sentence, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." What does he intend? That they should be acknowledged? Then what would they do?

Depressed by the passing of Faith, Matthew Arnold—in *Literature and Dogma*, *Culture and Anarchy*, and the debate with Huxley—deplores the language of the churchmen, the Liberal and Radical economists, and the scientists, and he turns desperately to literature to give a standard for "Conduct" for the majority of mankind. Astoundingly, this view has condemned him as an elitist—in a speech by Louis Kampf of MIT, the President of the Modern Language Association! But Arnold is explicitly drawing on the Wordsworthian doctrine that uncorrupted common speech, heightened by passion and imagination, binds mankind together, whereas the utilitarian speech of the Liberals or the ideological speech of the Radicals destroys humanity.

Nearer to our own times, bureaucratic, urbanized, impersonalized, and depersonalized, Martin Buber could no longer rely even on literature, but went back to face-to-face dialogue, the orally-transmitted legends of the Hasidim, and the experiences that underlie the text of the Bible. And we see that, in the present deep skepticism about special sciences and scientific technology, the young do not trust speech altogether, but only touching or silence.

In this dispute about the evolution of positivist language or the devolution to positivist language, both sides exaggerate—as usual. It is for quite reasonable human purposes that we have developed languages that are more accurately denotative and analytic and simpler in syntax than poetry. But the broader function of literary language, including poetry, also remains indispensable, because we are never exempt from having to cope with the world existentially, morally, and philosophically; and there is always emerging novelty that calls for imagination and poetry.

Consider the worldwide unease about the technology, the social engineering, the specialist sciences, and their positivist value-neutral language. Suddenly, the line of dissent of Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, William Morris, the symbolists, and the surrealists no longer seems to be the nostalgic romanticism of a vanishing minority, but the intense realism of a vanguard. I have found that I can mention even Jefferson and ruralism without being regarded as a crank. To try to cope with modern conditions by the methods of laboratory science, statistics, and positivist logic has come to seem obsessional, sometimes downright demented, as in the game-strategies for nuclear warfare. As in a dream, people recall that technology is a branch of moral philosophy, with the forgotten criteria of prudence, temperance, amenity, practicality for ordinary use; and they ask for a science that is ecological and modestly naturalistic rather than aggressively experimental. But one cannot *do* moral philosophy, ecology, and naturalism without literary language. It was only a few years ago that C. P. Snow berated literary men for their ignorance of positive science, and now it is only too clear that there is an even greater need for positive scientists who are literary. Unfortunately, since men of letters have for so long let themselves be pushed out, we don't have relevant literary language and topics to say right technology and ecology; our usual literary attempts are apocalyptic, sentimental, out of date, or private.

A physician, for instance, is faced with agonizing dilemmas: euthanasia when novel techniques can keep tissue alive; birth control despite the destiny of a human being as a parental animal; organ transplants and Lord knows what future developments; the allocation of scarce resources between the vital statistics of public health and the maximum of individual health, or mass practice and family practice. How does one spell out the Hippocratic oath in such issues? How can anyone by his own intuition and individual ratiocination, usually in crisis, possibly decide wisely and without anxiety and guilt? Yet there are almost no medical schools that find time for the philosophy of medicine. And we do not have the linguistic analysis, the reasoned description of

precedents, the imagined situations, in brief the literature, for such philosophy.

The social sciences have been positivist only during my lifetime, though Comte talked it up a hundred and fifty years ago. Marx was still able to say that Balzac was the greatest of the sociologists. Comte himself was energized by a crazy utopian poetry. Sir Henry Maine, Maitland, Max Weber, and so forth were historians, humanists. Dewey and Veblen were practical philosophers. Freud and Rank came on like novelists and fantasists and posed the problems for anthropology. It is, of course, a matter of opinion whether, after so many lispig centuries, the brief reign of mature positivist sociology has been brilliant.*

My hunch is that, despite a few more years guaranteed by big funding, it is moribund, done in by the social critics and the politically engaged of the past decades, who have had something useful to say. As one of the social critics, I can affirm that we are *philosophes*, men of letters.

Humanly speaking, the special sciences and their positivist language have been deeply ambiguous. At their best—it is a splendid best—they have gotten (and deserved) the pay-off of the theological virtues of faith, selflessness, and singleminded devotion, and of the moral virtues of honesty, daring, and accuracy. At their worst, however—and it is a very frequent worst—specialist science and its value-neutral language are an avoidance of experience, a narrow limitation of the self, and an act of bad faith. They are obsessional, an idolatry of the System of Science rather than a service to the unknown God and therefore to mankind. Needless to say, such science can be easily bought by money and power. Its language is boring because what the men do is not worth the effort, when it is not actually base. Being busy-work and form-ridden, it has no style.

3.

I HAVE written forty books. Evidently, to make literature is my way of being in the world, without which I would be at a loss. If I here examine and write the Apology for this behavior, I find that it is not very different from the older Defences of Poetry, but I do not need to make their exaggerated claims since I am just

* A recent study captained by Karl Deutsch, emanating from the University of Michigan, points to the great advances in recent years made by big teams of scholars heavily financed; and it refers sarcastically to those—namely me—who claim that we don't know much more than the ancients did about psychology, pedagogy, politics, or any other field where they had adequate empirical evidence. When I look at the list of great advances, however, I find them heavily weighted toward methodology and equipment; stochastic models, computer simulation, large-scale sampling, game theory, structural linguistics, cost-benefit analysis, etc., etc.; in brief, an enormous amount of agronomy and farm-machinery and field hands, but few edible potatoes.

describing my own situation—maybe it is simply that Sidney and Shelley were thirty years old, and I am sixty.

I have a scientific disposition, in a naturalistic vein. I get a continual satisfaction from seeing, objectively, how things are and work—it makes me smile, sometimes ruefully—and I like to write it down. But I do not exclude how I myself am and work as one of the things, unfortunately an omnipresent one in my experience. (I can occasionally smile at this too, but I am happier when I am not there.) God is history, how events actually turn out; but history includes also the history of me. God creates the world and I am only a creature, but I *am* a creature and He takes me into account, though He doesn't always know what's good for me and I complain a lot. Thus, my objective naturalistic sentences are inevitably colored by, and likely distorted by, my own story and feelings. They turn into literature.

I cannot take my wishes, feelings, and needs for granted and directly try to act them, as many other people seem to be able to do. I have to try to make sense, that is, to say my feelings and needs to myself and to other people. It is no doubt the sign of a deep anxiety; I cannot manage the callousness of healthy good conscience, though I do not feel much conscious guilt. I have to justify my needs with meanings. Conversely, I try to translate into action the meanings that I say, for, as with everybody else, much of the meaning that I know is unsatisfactory and something should be done about it. This combination of action and meaning also results in a lot of literature, rhetoric, social criticism, psychoanalysis, pedagogy, and press conferences.

WHETHER by nature or long habit that has become second-nature, I have that kind of personality that first says and then initiates what it wants, and then knows what it wants, and then wants it. Before saying, I feel just a vague unrest. With most people, it is wise to take seriously what they do, not what they say; their words are rationalizations, pious platitudes, or plain hypocrisy. But writers' words commit them, marshal their feelings, put them on the spot. I make a political analysis because I have a spontaneous gift for making sense; I then have to go through with the corresponding political exercise, unwillingly not because I am timid but because I am lousy at it. I tentatively say "I love you" and find that I love you. Or very often I have said what seems to me to be a bluff, beyond what I know or want, and it proves to be after all what I mean. Like the Egyptian god that Otto Rank mentions, a writer makes himself by saying.

I am in exile. Like everybody else, I live in a world that is given to me—I am thankful for it. It is not made by me—and that too is very well. But it is *not* my native home—therefore I make poems. "To fashion in our lovely English tongue

a somewhat livelier world, I am writing this book"—*The Empire City*. In order to appropriate this unfeeling bitter place where I am a second-class citizen. I was no happier when I was young, and I wrote poems; it is no bed of roses when I am toothless and have failing eyes, and I write poems. I never was a beauty, to get what I wanted sexually, but now I am also too tired to seek for it. But even worse than my private trouble is how men have made of the earth an object of disgust, and the stupidity and pettiness of statesmen tormenting mankind and putting additional obstacles in the way, as if life were not hard enough. It does not help, either, that people are so pathetic, the apparently powerful as much as the powerless. To pity is another drain of spirit. But it helps me to say it just as it is, however it is.

Also, I am good at thinking up little expedients of how it could be otherwise. I tend not to criticize, nor even to notice, until I can imagine something that would make more sense. My expedients are probably not workable in the form I conceive them, and I certainly do not know how to get them adopted—they are utopian literature—but they rescue me from the horror of metaphysical necessity, and I hope they are useful for my readers in the same way. When they are neat solutions, they make a happy comic kind of poetry. Maybe they are all the more charming because they are practical, simpleminded, and impossible. It is the use of comic writing.

Meaning and confusion are both beautiful. What is chilling is great deeds that have no meaning, the stock-in-trade of warriors and statesmen, but my radical friends also go in for them. What is exasperating is positivistic clarity and precision that are irrelevant to the real irk. A value of literature is that it can inject confusion into positivistic clarity, bring the shadows into the foreground.

Ancient and modern writers are my closest friends, with whom I am in sympathy. They are wise and talented and their conversation sends me. Maybe I am lonely more than average—how would I know?—but I need them. Books and artworks are extraordinary company—one does not need to make allowances!—and in the nature of the case, they speak more clearly to us writers and artists because we respond to them most actively; we notice how he does that, and if it is congenial we say, "I could do something like that." Despite its bloodlessness, the tradition of literature is a grand community and, much as I envy the happy and the young, I doubt that they have as good a one. (How would I know?) Freud said that artists, giving up animal satisfaction and worldly success for their creative life, hope by this detour to win money, fame, and the love of women. He was wrong—I never had such a hope—but I have thereby entered a company that has given me many beautiful hours. Often, talking to young people at their colleges, when I quote

from great writers whom I evidently treat as familiars, they look at me with envy because I have a tradition which they lack, through no fault of theirs, but I do not know how to pass it on.

AND what a thing it is to write English sentences!—rapid in thought, sometimes blunt, sometimes sinuous in syntax. When writing, I take my syntax and words from my colloquial speech; I strongly disapprove of the usual distinction between “standard colloquial” and “standard literary.” I will write the slang that I consider worth using when I talk, for instance in the last few pages I have written “he comes on strongly,” “their conversation sends me,” “I am lousy at it,” “he talked it up.” I have no doubt that my voice can be heard in my writing by those who know me face to face. Lecturing, I just muse along and think aloud in a conversational tone, referring to a few notes I have jotted down. When I read verse aloud, I again use a conversational tone and follow the ongoing prose sense rather than the sonority, meter, imagery, or drama. I do not try to be portentous—

*Say my song simply for its prosy sentence,
cutting at the commas, pausing at the
periods.*

*Any poetry in it will then be apparent,
motion of mind in English syntax.*

On the other hand, though I follow the sense, I am *not* intent on conveying any truth or message, but just the beginning, middle, and end of a whole literary work. I will strike whatever impedes or detracts from the whole, regardless of the “truth.” For what I communicate must, in the end, be not anything I know but how I do in getting *rid* of the poem, putting it out there. Afterward, God help me, I am left so much the less.

I use the word “God” freely when I write—much less freely when I speak—never when I think or talk to myself. I don’t know clearly what I intend by it. I cannot pray in the usual sense, though I sometimes use the awareness-exercises of psychotherapy which, I guess, is my religion. But in writing of the fundamental relations of my soul, mankind, and the world, I find the terminology of St. Thomas or Karl Barth far more congenial and accurate than that of Freud or Reich, who are either too “subjective” or too “objective,” they do not say how it is. To say deliberately just how it is with me is apparently how I pray, if I may judge by the language that comes to me. Especially when I am at a loss for grief, confusion, gratitude, or fear. In moments of impasse—but only when I have earned the right to say it because I have tried hard—I have written “Creator spirit, come.”

Maybe it is that when I think or talk to myself, I am embarrassed, but when I write I am not embarrassed. I now remember that I fell on my

knees and said a prayer when I had finished writing *The Empire City*, and indeed the ending of that book is very good.

When I write public themes—urbanism, psychology, delinquency, the school system, the use of technology, resisting the draft—I of course try to be honest with the facts, to “save the phenomena,” but again I rather obviously put more trust in the literary process, the flow of saying my say, than in statistics. I take the statistics seriously when they contradict me; I modify my line or make a distinction, or I explain how the statistics are an artifact or haven’t asked the right question. I like using abrasive material to work with and I have no impulse to sweep difficulties under the rug. (Sometimes, however, I am simply ignorant.) But when the “facts” run positively in my direction, I do not argue from them but treat them literarily; 85 per cent becomes “a good majority,” 60 per cent is “in very many cases,” 35 per cent is “an appreciable number of cases,” 20 per cent is “sometimes it happens that.” A single individual situation that I judge to be typical and for which I can provide a global, literary explanation to my satisfaction, weighs more than all the rest, because it is for real and must be coped with politically and humanly. Except for rhetorical effect, I usually don’t make generalizations anyway, because I don’t care about them—when I do make them they tend to be outrageous because I am outraged. I do not understand a cause or a reason as a correlation, but animally, as continuous with a muscular push or a perceptual *Gestalt*.

But when I rely on the literary process, the flow of saying my say, this does not mean that I say what I *want* to say but what *can*—strongly—be said. The work has its own discipline, to be clear, to make sense, to hang together, to go from the beginning to the end. For instance, I do not allow myself the usual concessive clause, “Although some cases are not so-and-so, yet the majority of cases are so-and-so.” Such a construction is stylistically feeble. If there are well-marked exceptions or a single outstanding exception, it is better to find the distinction that explains the exception and to *affirm* it rather than concede it. The difference will then strengthen the explanation of the other cases; it will provide a new reason. Often it provides the best reason, the one I hadn’t thought of till I had to write the sentence. A strong and scrupulous style is a method of discovery.

Commenting on this, an unfriendly critic might say, “You mean that it is true if it sounds good.” To which I would reply, in an unfriendly tone of voice, “Yes.”

My reliance on colloquial speech and the process of literature is certainly closely related, whether as cause or effect, to my political disposition. I am anarchistic and agitational, and I am

conservative and traditional. So is good speech. Insistently and consistently applied, any humane value, such as common sense, honor, honesty, or compassion, will soon take one far out of sight of the world as it is; and to have meaning is one of the virtues that is totally disruptive of established institutions. Nevertheless, meaningful language and coherent syntax are always historical and traditional and always have a kind of logic. Speaking is a spontaneous action of the speaker, and he speaks only in a community, for a hearer. Colloquial speech cannot be regimented, whereas even perception and science can be regimented—perception because it is passive, science because they can put blinders on it like a directed horse. But the vulnerability of colloquial speech, unfortunately, is that its freedom is limited to where the speakers have initiative, eyewitnessing, and trust, and these limits may be made narrow indeed. The literary process expands these limits by historical memory, international culture, and welcoming the dark unconscious which common folk prudently inhibit. Common speech can be pretty empty and aimless, whereas to write you must know at least something and try to be clear—it is a profession.

Slogans can't last long in either common speech or literature. In revolutionary situations, the new people, making bad literature (and

sometimes even writing it down), have to recall ancient languages, as the Reformers picked up the Hebrew patriarchs, the French Revolutionists picked up Marcus Brutus, and the hippies pick up various Indians and Amerindians; but the good writers ridicule these too.

THUS, my Apology for the literature to which I have devoted the years of my life is very like the others over several centuries, and it is noteworthy that they are all similar. Possibly if we had a very different kind of community, we would say something different; but possibly it is the human condition—how would I know? Literature confounds the personal and impersonal, meaning and beginning to act, and thought and feeling. In this confusion which is like actual experience, it makes a kind of sense. It imagines what might be, taking account of what is. Using the code of language, it continually revises the code to cope with something new. It is more conservative than science and more daring than science. It makes the assured and powerful uneasy, if only out of powerless spite. It speaks my common speech and it makes human speech noble. It provides a friendly community across ages and boundaries, and cheers my solitude. It is the way I pray to God and patriotically revere my background. It is legitimacy and rebellion.

Literature and Political Responsibility

Apropos the "Letters of Thomas Mann"

Erich Heller

1.

LITERATURE and Political Responsibility—a couple that have acquired some notoriety in the history of thought both by their mutual attraction and their ceaseless quarrels. Indeed, the two have been married and divorced so often that the invitation to dwell with them is unlikely to be received with a sense of relaxed serenity; and the irritable antiquity of the entanglement only increases the sense of discomfort. The more one reflects upon this problem, the surer one becomes that it would have qualified for admission with that French Surrealist poet Robert Desnos who once proclaimed (and Surrealism relished such imperial gestures): "The questions that I am willing to discuss are all unanswerable." And like many another insoluble problem, this too has long since moved into a drafty halfway house situated between the banal and the unmanageably complex. Yet imagine a student who has been kept in ideal ignorance of the problem's bothersome history. Would it not be easy enough to keep him occupied for a very long time with respectable works of literature without his discovering anything problematical in the relations between writing and politics? Would he, reading or seeing Shakespeare's history plays, feel that the poet's blatant political partisanship is to the detriment of his poetic or dramatic effects? Indeed, that it produces any difficulties whatever? Or would he, if he studied the literature of the German Middle Ages, sense any betrayal of the pure Muse in the poems with which Walther von der Vogelweide, animated by the utmost partiality, joins the political controversies of his age?

Surely, history abounds in the kind of literature that wears its politics, as it were, upon its sleeve, the right or the left sleeve, leaving him who is bent upon examining the relationship between the two with nothing to question, interpret, uncover, unmask; he would be defeated by the obvious. For there are, again and again, artistically effective alliances between literary talent,

sometimes even genius, and social or political engagement. We need only think, apart from those just mentioned, of the young Schiller, of Heine, Büchner, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Zola, Ibsen, the young Gerhart Hauptmann, Heinrich Mann, Sartre, Camus, to give a few of the more conspicuous examples, and not to compose a list of men of letters whose names, by virtue of the distinction of their style and the vivacity of their political ideas, ought to be included in the manuals of both literature and political thought: some of the French Encyclopedists, for instance, or Burke, or de Maistre, or many among the 19th-century Russian intelligentsia, or George Orwell—the kind of writers, in fact, who prompted Thomas Mann in that deeply troubled period of his life when, overwhelmed by this unquiet problem, he wrote *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man*, to say in anger and in untranslatable German that literature was *identical* with politics; in untranslatable German, for he meant "literature" as distinct from "poetry"; and only in German is—or perhaps rather was—the word *Literatur*, as opposed to *Dichtung*, capable of conveying that contemptuous pride of the spirit with which Thomas Mann invested it. Gone for good, it would seem, are those German days when the radical distinction between literature and the poetic spirit made some sense, yet it was only fifty years ago that one of the most intelligent and certainly one of the most gifted German writers could insist upon this opposition. As again his *Letters** fascinatingly and often disconcertingly

* *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889-1955*, selected and translated by Richard and Clara Winston, introduction by Richard Winston, Knopf, 690 pp., \$17.50. This volume is a well-chosen, well-introduced, and, apart from some mistakes, well-translated selection. Well-translated: this is to say that it is not only faithful to the meaning of the original (and this is saying a great deal in view of the sheer faultiness of the available translations of Thomas Mann's works), but also fluent and "readable," although this is a term of praise that one would like to avoid; for to say of a book that it is readable seems not much better than to say of a meal that it is edible. But here it is meant to be applause, even if the occasional comparison with the original reveals some mistranslations. One of the more "grievous" mistakes is, however, almost Thomas Mann's own fault, or at least is due to the excessive wariness with which he speaks in an early letter of the possibly autobiographical nature of *Death in Venice*. The correspondent's question appears to have been: Is the homoerotic disposition "accessible" to Mann? No, "hardly," "not even conditionally,"

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show, he was to take it back, and then take back a little of the taking back, and then once more modify or altogether deny the original position, and so on—a “so on” that bears witness not so much to the changeability of Thomas Mann’s mind as to the refractory character of the problem of “literary politics.”

IN THE years of the First World War he put aside the—as yet slim—manuscript of *The Magic Mountain*, to do as Hans Castorp, the hero of that novel, later did when at last he broke the spell of the sick mountain to become a soldier on the battlefields of Flanders. Thomas Mann, pen in hand, fought the battle for the fatherland on the pages, ever growing over the years, of *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man*, a book as tortured, inspired, sinister, enthusiastic, and German as much later, and yet not so much later, was to be *Doctor Faustus*. Germany is the protagonist of both books. In the first it is a Germany that defends her soul and her aristocratic genius of music, poetry, and irony against the blatantly political rhetoric of “democracy,” “civilization,” and “progress”; in the second a Germany that, in the same conflict, has perverted her soul and loses it. Soul defended or soul lost: he would be a poor reader who did not perceive that the author’s love of the lost soul had become even greater, nourished as it was by an abundance of pain and dismay.

Meditations of an Unpolitical Man is the last great document of the conservative mind—a mind, in this case, both patriotically German and European, and at the same time endowed with a sensibility that clearly recognizes the historical decadence of the virtues and values it struggles to uphold. It is based upon the belief that “literature,” the literature produced by, for instance, Thomas Mann’s brother Heinrich, the Settembrini, the *Zivilisationsliterat*, is the upshot of the French Revolution, the literary aspect of democratic politics, and the destructive invader of the domain of the unpolitical inner spirit expressing

or “hardly in exceptional circumstances” (“und ich darf sagen, sie ist es mir kaum bedingter Weise”). The translators convey what may well be a supportable opinion of their own but is the opposite of Thomas Mann’s complicated phrase and meaning: “. . . insofar as it is accessible to me (and I may say, with few reservations, that it is)” (p. 102). But I have no doubt that Richard and Clara Winston are, like F. D. Luke who recently translated *Tonio Kröger* and other stories of Thomas Mann, translators whom Thomas Mann’s publishers, assisted perhaps by a Foundation, should give the time necessary for at last doing him justice in English. This will be impossible as long as translators’ time is paid not in terms of hours but of words or pages. Mann’s urbanity; his ironical and gentlemanly shyness in approaching the truth; the precision of which his controlled diffidence is capable; his long-windedness which breathes elegance into apparent awkwardness—this has, after all, a superb correlative in English: Henry James. Translators of Thomas Mann ought to be given the leisure to immerse themselves in James’s prose.

itself in music, poetry, and metaphysics. This was in 1916. Was there, then, after the Second World War, any reason to assume that from the soil of that “unpolitical” domain grew not only the genius of the German nation but also its wickedness? Was it not simply “the *Junkers* and industrialists” who had “put Hitler into power”? An emigré German teacher from Australia asked such questions and wanted to be assured by Thomas Mann that, for instance, neither Hegel nor Nietzsche could be held responsible for the National Socialists’ catastrophic misbehavior. Well, yes and no, answered the writer who was just about to complete *Doctor Faustus*. His reply of December 29, 1946 concedes to the teacher that “as a teacher” he is right in allowing his young Australians to immerse themselves in the minds of such German philosophers. And yet he, Thomas Mann, had scribbled a doubting *hmm* in the margin of the letter. For does this dismissal of responsibility not reduce the stature of the intellect, does it not make the works of the mind look more innocuous than they are or want to be? For that Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche contributed to shaping the German mind and its dealing with life and the world is as undeniable as the fact that Martin Luther had something to do with the Thirty Years’ War, whose horrors he explicitly took “upon his neck” in advance.

Even giddier in renunciation, more eager in taking back the “unpolitical” doctrine of *Meditations*, is a letter of April 18, 1945 to his “brother in spirit—or cousin at any rate,” Hermann Hesse. It combines his thanks for *The Bead Game* with his announcement that for some time now he himself has been working on *Doctor Faustus*, a novel that has, he believes, a very close kinship to Hesse’s book. And yet, he seems to imply, it differs from it in one important point: *The Bead Game* is the product of an imagination “hovering” ironically above the conventional opposites. Therefore, he says, it is not surprising that it is a plea for the mind’s freedom from political ideologies. Very well, but what is meant by “mind”? “If ‘mind’ is the principle, the power, which desires the good; if it is a sensitive alertness toward the changing aspects of truth, in a word, a ‘divine solicitude’ which seeks to approach what is right and requisite at a given time, then it is political, whether or not this epithet sounds pretty. It seems to me that nowadays nothing alive escapes politics. Refusal is politics too; it is a political act on the side of the evil cause.”

Who, one is tempted to wonder, is the speaker? Of course, the radically converted author of *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man*. How radically converted? And what, in the case of an artist, does “conversion” mean? In 1930—long after he had abandoned his conservative nationalism and made himself an advocate of the Weimar Republic, even of Democratic Socialism—he proclaimed, in an essay on “Culture and Social-

ism," that indeed he no longer held the *opinions* of *Meditations*, but its "true insight" (*Erkenntnis*) remained undeniably right. How is this? Is there a way of distinguishing between "opinion" (*Meinung*) and "true insight"? There is; although it is impossible to do it in one sentence, even if it is helpful to recall another one, written by him in 1923 in his oration on the "German Republic." "I recant nothing," he said then, "I renounce nothing essential. I spoke the truth, my truth, then, and am speaking it now." Nevertheless, he himself needed the four volumes of *Joseph and His Brothers* to show what he meant: namely that "divine solicitude"—Jacob was its master and Joseph overdid it sometimes with charm and wit—consists in fathoming which variation on the constant theme of the Spirit was demanded by any particular moment of Time, this medium, ever-changing in its claims, of the Spirit's journeying toward its full realization in the mind and heart of Man. It is, in the last resolve, a Hegelian configuration of history, and, of course, there may occur errors in man's assessment, at any given historical instant, of the exact station of the Spirit.

Thomas Mann, in that letter to Hesse, was in error if, with his critique of the unpolitical intent of Hesse's *The Bead Game*, he wished to imply that his own *Doctor Faustus* was a political book. True, he inserted (and "inserted" is unfortunately the right word) an exhortatory passage into *Faustus*—Leverkühn's last speech, the oration the composer delivers in the idiom of the Lutheran German Faustbook of 1587 in which he confesses his pact with the Devil, and introduces the event that is not to take place: his playing of the score that reveals his "breakthrough," by means of the most rigid musical calculation, into the sphere of ecstatic genius—the bargaining price paid by the Devil. It is a madman's speech, and ends in the madman's paralytic collapse, and contains those political sentences, the only ones which in that masterfully written scene may give rise to some doubt about the speaker's musical accomplishment: they strike an utterly wrong note. Leverkühn, there, takes the guilt of the age, in Luther's phrase, "upon his neck." For in abandoning himself to his genius's "infernal drunkenness," he disregarded the commandment that a man should be "sober and vigilant" and prudently see to it that here on earth an order is established that would provide the proper soil for beautiful works to grow from, works that would not, at their source, be in need of devilish prodding.

This is completely out of character: not even in the remotest nook of Leverkühn's unconscious could there ever have stirred the impulse to become a supporter of "causes." (Not to ask the unanswerable question, what the ingredients are of such "soil." They are certainly not social justice or political morality. The mere thought of the slaves of Greece, or the serfs of the Middle

Ages, or the riches of the aristocrats for whom Mozart made his music, does away with such noble surmise.) But it is not only out of character, it is altogether foreign to the *historical* philosophy that pervades the whole novel. The "danger of sterility," so intensely felt by the artists of the epoch, "is not to be blamed on social conditions," says the Devil in his conversation with Leverkühn, and, as so often in this interior dialogue, he is right. Certainly, these "conditions" may be truly felt to be incompatible with the self-sufficient harmony of a work of art. But this is "accidental"; for "the prohibitive difficulties of the work lie deep in its own nature. It is the historical development of the musical material itself which has turned against the idea of harmony." No, if a category has to be found, then *Doctor Faustus* is not a political but a historical novel. *Mario and the Magician* is, by comparison, a simple political allegory, and yet its author said of it in one of his letters that he did not like "to have this story considered a political satire." In the case of *Doctor Faustus* he certainly did not dismiss a political interpretation as energetically, but wherever he invited it in the work itself, the work itself refused to endorse the invitation: nowhere, for instance, is it less successful than in the task of illuminating the intended parallel between "my friend" and "my fatherland" (the narrator's last words in the novel), between the story of Leverkühn and the story of Germany. It was Thomas Mann's will that it should, but the book knew better.

"The book wanted it so." The words occur in a letter to Agnes E. Meyer, the American recipient of many a letter from him, and concern Fitelberg, the formidable Jewish impresario who makes an important episodic appearance in *Doctor Faustus* (the Riccaut scene, Thomas Mann called it once, referring to the celebrated anti-French scene in Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*). The correspondent seems to have expressed the fear that there might be some anti-Semitic rejoicing at the figure of Fitelberg. "Curious," Thomas Mann replies, the same worry was expressed by his son Klaus "when I first read the chapter to the family." And to make matters worse for the Jews, their other "representative" in the book, "the Fascist Breisach," is also far from being an endearing character. Surely, political considerations would have made it advisable to avoid even the slightest suspicion of anti-Semitism. But "the book wanted it so." For clearly it was *Dichtung*, not *Literatur*.

2.

Literatur versus *Dichtung*, literature which for Thomas Mann was politics, versus poetry which within that juxtaposition enjoyed the reputation of being unpolitical, and this despite Shakespeare and Walther von

der Vogelweide and Bertolt Brecht (quickly to drop the name that at the present time is likely to be thought of first in any discussion of literature and politics, and who may indeed be this problem's most problematical problem child)—well, despite Shakespeare and Walther and Brecht and many another perpetrator of political poetry, there is, of course, a formidable amount of *Dichtung*, and certainly of lyrical poetry which might be put before that imaginary student; and if we are sure that he was not disturbed by the obvious political affections and disaffections of certain literary works, he will now remain equally unworried by the blissful absence of any "politically responsible" thought from the mind of, for instance, Keats as he lyrically addresses the Grecian Urn or the Nightingale; or of Blake as he laments the sickness of the Rose; or of Goethe as he strolls through rhymes and woods with the sole purpose of enjoying his purposelessness:

*Und nichts zu suchen,
Das war mein Sinn.
(And naught to seek,
That was my goal)*

And even if it becomes the fashion here and there, a fashion created by moles of the mind burrowing deep into the "structure" of lyrical poems so that its analysis might bring to light the "social motivations," and therefore political bias, indeed a kind of insidious class-subconscious, from the layers below the humus in which "pure poetry" has its shallow roots, we may still slip into the hands of our unsuspecting reader a few poems of Bertolt Brecht himself: the one, for instance, which sings in the most private of lyrical moods of lovers' embraces, and how quickly they are forgotten, much more quickly than the white cloud that hovered in the blue September sky above the scene of love; or that lyrically perfect *Mahagonny* song of the Crane flying with the Cloud, allegories of lovers who are utterly given up to their love and lost to the world of sober, dependable conduct, and who are yet utterly affirmed by the poet in the manner only good poetry or great love are capable of affirming. It is the poem ending with the line that may well be the consummate message of social irresponsibility:

*Wohin, ihr?—Nirgend hin.—Von wem davon?—
Von allen.* (You, up there, where are you off to?—Nowhere.—Away from whom?—From all.)

"Away from all"—it is undeniable that this cry of Brecht's lovers is also the voice of poetry itself in some of its most exquisite phases: namely when, in Yeats's words, the Imagination is brought

*... to that pitch where it casts out
All that is not itself ...;*

or when the poet is entirely immersed in the business of making a poem, the phase that Goethe, rather angrily, once defended against any

kind of moral or social interference: "Certainly, it is possible that a work of art is of moral consequence, but to demand of the artist moral intentions and goals is to spoil his craft." Small wonder that Plato, despite the excellent relations his great mentor Socrates entertained with Apollo and the Muses, emphatically crossed out the "and" between "Poetry" and "Social Responsibility." To look back then for a moment to the *locus classicus* where, together with many other problems, this too received its first and stubbornly enduring articulation: Poets, Plato thought, were by their very nature debarred from being responsible citizens of the ideal Republic. Divinely or demoniacally inspired as they are, they may claim citizenship in some kind of musical *Civitas Dei*, or rather *Civitas Musae*; yet the summit of Parnassus is no breeding ground for civic virtues. Where civic virtues count, poets disturb the peace. Poetry and social responsibility? You might just as well try to turn Zeus himself into a husband faithfully abiding by the virtuous conventions of monogamy.

IF TIME is the test—no, not necessarily of the truth but of the power of an idea—then that celebrated ruling about the poets in Plato's *Republic* has passed it: again and again this doctrine, in one form or another (and mostly without its expositors being conscious of its source), has found acceptance: not only with the rulers of some republics, but also with the poets themselves, sometimes even in poetical households boasting famous political commitments. Platonic, following from the *Republic* directly or inversely, is both the absolute aestheticism of 19th-century French coinage and, vice versa, Hitler's ostracizing what he regarded as degenerate art. And surely, it is an echo from Plato's *Republic* that is discernible in the French Symbolists' emphatic and emphatically anti-Saint-Simonist abrogation of any social contract that may have been concluded in the past between Art and Life (an abrogation through which artists exhibit a kind of Platonic and "unpolitical" beggars' pride); and Platonic indeed was, before them, Schopenhauer's definition of Art as the exercise of minds rendering with the materials of this world, with words and colors and sounds, the visions obtained in another sphere, the sphere, ironically enough, of Platonic Forms, sights attainable only to those who have freed themselves temporarily of all ambitions, purposes, social responsibilities of this Will-driven life.

Plato was present, *malgré lui*, in the young Nietzsche's belief that only the purest aesthetic contemplation of the world can justify the world's existence: "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world forever justified," the most audacious artistic theodicy ever attempted; and Plato has, not without Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's mediation, a say in Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*,

the story of the young artist who—not quite unlike Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry, Rilke—was painfully convinced that he had to lose his citizenship in the commonwealth of honorable and virtuous men in order to reach the heights of art. Again, Plato altogether dominates the scenery of ideas that Mann has arranged for the action of *Death in Venice*: beginning with the moment when the “classical” writer Aschenbach, struck by the “irresponsible” passion for the beautiful boy Tadzio-Phaedrus, socratically warns himself, by dreamily warning the youth, that although beauty is “the lover’s way toward the spirit,” it is “only the way, little Phaedrus,” and issuing in the catastrophic recognition that, along that way, “we poets are bound to go astray,” and will, worshippers of beauty that they are, be destroyed by their idol; and the more they aspire to the classical role of educators, the more blatantly ludicrous will “our magisterial style” look one day: it will be seen as “folly and false pretense,” and farcical “all the honors bestowed upon us”; and “to teach the young by means of art is a dangerous thing and ought to be forbidden” because Form, the preoccupation of artists, is “in its innermost core indifferent to good and evil.” All this, and more, is prefigured in Plato’s banishment of the poets from the company of morally dependable citizens.

Equally clear is the link that connects Plato’s pronouncement about the poets with the repeated declarations of the Russian Communist party against an art “alienated” from the social realities and responsibilities of Soviet society. For while the totalitarian states have tried to prove—to Plato, as it were—that there could, after all, be an art “shouldering” its prescribed political obligations (and the art that did such shouldering was the well-known and excruciatingly well-behaved “Social Realism” in both the German and the Russian tyrannies), poets, from the Parnassians’ *Part pour Part* to the Symbolists’ absolutely “pure poetry,” have been passionately intent upon making the highest artistic virtue out of precisely that which Plato regarded as the ineradicable vice of poetry: its detachment from the body politic, its unreliable ambiguities and ironies vis-à-vis the seriousness demanded by the moral life, and its helpless exposure to the seductions of fantasy, play, and pure form: in brief, its tendency to climb up to “that pitch where it casts out all that is not itself.” *Les extrêmes se touchent*, and the point at which the extreme anti-aesthetic philosophy of the totalitarian state and the extreme aestheticism of Absolute Poetry meet, is that passage from Plato’s *Republic*.

CAUGHT between these extremes of literary theory and practice, many critics, interpreters, and teachers of literature were unfortunately inclined to follow suit, and either ran with the hares of aesthetic “escapism”

or hunted with the hounds of the totalitarian ideologies. Few, alas, remained immune from the infection. For critically to receive a work of literature as if it were truly nothing but an aesthetically organized assemblage of words on a page, or a sequence of lines containing varying or recurrent “images,” or a concert of rhythmically ordered sound and artistically transmuted fury, means uncritically to accept a strange, if not pathological, belief in sheer formal perfection which, on the part of the artist, may lead to the frantic illusion that all contents are but tiresome obstacles impeding the poet’s progress toward absolute poetry. The form is the content: it was this creed that Nietzsche, the very inventor of the “theodicy” of aestheticism, called perverse. For he knew that the artist may become obsessed with form as content—just as if the thing to be given form did not exist, or had to be annihilated rather than molded; and Baudelaire, so often himself under the spell of such aesthetic despotism, wrote of *le goût immodéré de la forme*, “the immoderate taste for form,” which bred “disorders, monstrous and unheard of.”

To look upon such formal excess as the norm, indeed to derive from the “monstrous disorder” a method of literary criticism, means to accept the extreme situation that, at the other end, has called forth the politico-ideological judge of literature who absurdly measures literary creations by degrees of their “realism,” or, worse still, by the relative conformity or dissent of the political “opinions” they seem to utter or imply. The philosophy of the type of criticism which many years ago was New represents merely a novel aspect of that betrayal of which, in a classical treatise, Julien Benda accused the intellectuals: their readiness to give a hand in the operation which removes from the fabric of man’s social and political arrangements the spiritual conscience—that conscience which must be one of the chief inspirations also of literary criticism if it is to justify the important place we have allotted to it in our higher education; and the subtlest variant of the surgery that severs the link between aesthetics and ethics, between the disciplined life of the imagination and the social-moral reality may well be to encapsulate literature in a sphere all its own. For literature is certainly many things, but few of the things that literature is would be worthy of our attention if the spiritual conscience were altogether absent from it. Then indeed Plato would have been not so wrong in preparing its expulsion from the commonwealth of men; and yet again not so right either: for literature would then simply be trivial, and would not matter, and the hypnotic glimmer of deranged profundities and the blinding glitter of broken mirages would try in vain to make up for its lost meaning and beauty. W. H. Auden, not so long ago, charmingly repudiated this radical aesthetic operation, and in doing so, he spoke with the

voice of poetry itself, a voice unmistakable by its power to please and to shock. You hope, the poet in that poem says to himself, you hope that your works, aesthetically successful as they are, may one day serve as the grand justification of your existence, no matter how otherwise you have conducted it. But will this apology be accepted? Perhaps not. For

*God may reduce you
on Judgment Day
to tears of shame,
reciting by heart
the poems you would
have written, had
your life been good.*

Nonetheless the problem persists, and seems to have invaded the consciousness of poets themselves with ever greater force. Nietzsche, in saying that there must have been a time when the moral and the aesthetic domains were one (Wittgenstein, in philosophic daring, maintained that they are identical), was surely more regretful about their present dissociation than confident about the indefinite past of their oneness. This anticipatory spokesman of many modern poets knew neither Kierkegaard nor Keats, but he would have supported much of what these men wrote about the moral dubiousness of the aesthetic state; indeed, he did, as it were, write it himself. There are numerous Nietzschean utterances on art and artists that are almost indistinguishable from certain passages in Kierkegaard's writings; and even a thorough student of Nietzsche would, if he did not happen to know that it was by Keats, readily believe that it was Nietzsche who spoke of "the poetical Character" as having "no character," as taking "as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen"; and: "What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon Poet."

3.

TO MOVE from a poet and a poetic thinker to a writer of novels and letters: in his *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man* Thomas Mann summons witnesses from every corner of the world's literature to make his case for the "Chameleon Poet" and against the prodigal brother Heinrich, the *Zivilisationsliterat*, the political moralist. Has he, Thomas Mann asks, really not enough self-knowledge to see the lie in his politico-moral "commitments"? Not to recognize that, as a writer of literature, he will forever remain an "aesthetic opportunist" to whom the aesthetic success of his sentences is bound to matter more than the success of the moral or political opinions those sentences may advocate? "*Bellezza* radicalism"—this is what Thomas Mann calls the irresponsible politics of his aesthetic brother seized with political enthusiasm. In the denunciation of this *bellezza*

radicalism Thomas Mann is most formidably inspired. Some people, he says, allow themselves to be etymologically misled into taking radicalism in literature for depth. But no, it is "a pretty superficiality, a cult of the generous gesture which at times assumes an almost choreographic quality." And indeed, the *Zivilisationsliterat* once exclaimed: "Liberty—that is the Dionysian dance of Reason." And Thomas Mann, calling this "ballerina politics," quotes Goethe who, in his *Italian Journey*, said: "Liberty and equality can only be enjoyed in a state of giddy lunacy."

The radical *littérateur*, even by declaring his political hostilities in stylistically ennobled frenzy, surreptitiously wants his enemies to be impressed by the style of his attack, and even in indicting the world for its state of misrule and mismanagement, he wants the accused to be fascinated by the phrasing of his indictment. And even the *littérateur* has in him enough of the disposition of art to know that the artist still woos with his aggression, seduces with the chastity of his language, and seeks the admiration of those he damns with his last judgments. Therefore, there is always a subtle kind of insincerity in his proclaimed opposition to the "world" as represented by the society of his time. He wishes to please. What ultimately matters to him is success—not necessarily, of course, in the crudest but certainly in the most fastidious sense of the word: success as that delicious contentment achieved in the perfection of a sentence, the happy appropriateness of a cadence, the conclusiveness of a metaphor. Beliefs and opinions—what are they to him if not building material for the great aesthetic artifice, "matter to be consumed by form," as Schiller once defined the artistic process. What pleases the artist more than one conviction, is the splendid clash of two. Indeed, he does take "as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen," and even if sometimes he chooses politically to commit himself and to forswear the "culinary" ambition to give pleasure, he may, perhaps even to "the general regret" of his followers, a little later be compelled to follow the natural call of art and settle down once more "in the domain of the agreeable and the pleasurable." Bertolt Brecht announced this in 1948 as his intention after all the alienating and political moralizing of the preceding years. There is little political authenticity to be found in the aesthetic sphere. Therefore, it would seem that, vis-à-vis all forms of moralizing politics, it befits the artist to remain skeptical and ironical rather than "committed," quite apart from the question of whether, if he truly be an artist, his would not be more a tragic or comic reading of the human lot than a political and ideological one.

Turgenev once confessed that he felt always a little lost when asked to speak his own mind on this or that question, and deprived of the chance of hiding behind the exchanges of imaginary

characters: "Then it always seemed to me that one might just as well and with equal right assert the opposite of what I am saying. But if I talk about a red nose or fair hair, well, then the hair is fair and the nose is red, and no amount of reflection will reflect it away." It is even possible to say that a man, capable of authentically speaking his own mind in a direct, straightforward way, would not and could not create epics or dramas or novels where the truth of the work's totality—"the whole is the truth," said Hegel—always limits, or modifies, or even refutes the truth presented or uttered by any particular character in it. This makes it almost symbolically right that we know nothing or little about the individualities of some of the greatest poets, of Homer or Aeschylus or Sophocles or Shakespeare; and helps to explain why Dostoevsky so often had to outshout—to the point of hysteria—the many voices speaking in him and therefore in his novels when he wished to speak with his own religious, moral, or political voice (can he who has conceived the story of the Grand Inquisitor still believe in the Church, in any Church?); and why Tolstoy felt he had to cease writing novels in order to become a religiously and ethically integrated person.

GR EAT works of art are made after the creative principle of Nature herself; and Nature, wrote Schopenhauer, "does not do as bad writers do who, when they show a knave or a fool, are so full of clumsy moral purpose that behind every such figure we glimpse, as it were, the writer himself, disavowing their minds and words, and warning us with a raised finger: 'This is a knave, this is a fool: do not listen to what he says!' No, Nature does as Shakespeare and Goethe do, in whose works every person, and be it the Devil himself, is, while he speaks, in the right; because he is conceived so objectively that we are compelled to sympathize with him: for, like a product of Nature, he has grown from an inner principle by virtue of which everything he says and does appears natural and therefore necessary."

Beheld with the eyes of art, the world appears *sub specie necessitatis*, under the aspect of Necessity. Art's idea of man remains more "natural" and "chthonic" than "social," even where the discourse is about man in society. Therefore it may happen that the artist's imagination makes a mockery of his declared political intentions; and this not by means of ideological inconsistencies creeping into his work but, far worse, through the imagination's insistence upon its own autonomous truth and knowledge; and what the imagination knows is the denial of all great political or moral expectations. There is about the characters, for instance, of Balzac, or, at his artistically best, even of the "literary scientist" and political reformer Zola, or indeed of the revolutionary Bertolt Brecht—there is about their successfully created characters a quality of natural

destiny and monumental inevitability which reduces to all but irrelevance any hope of radically affecting their good or evil by changing their social functions through a changed social environment. Certainly, it may well be the writer's wish to show his characters as pawns in a social game the rules of which he abominates and desires radically to change. Yet the better he is as an artist, the more likely it is that his imagination will defeat his purpose by setting these figures in their course more like celestial bodies whose revolutions appear indifferent to anything except their center and fields of gravity. Look how much trouble Brecht took to make his *Mother Courage* or his *Galileo* "politically relevant," and how little his trouble was rewarded!

We can be sure he did not know that, to all intents and purposes, he quoted Thomas Mann's *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man* (he would probably have been rather alarmed if he had known) when in July 1934, in Svendborg, he talked to his friend Walter Benjamin about the nature of his political engagement: "Often I imagine a tribunal," he said, "a tribunal, questioning me: 'What about it? Are you really in earnest?' Then I should have to admit: 'No, not altogether. I think far too much of artistic matters, of what profits the theater, to be entirely serious about the political.'" This is admirable, and it is true. Equally true is what he said afterward: that the really great poets are those for whom there is no rift between the "art" and the "commitment." As an example of such "*Substanz-Dichter*," as he called them, that is, poets creating from the undivided integrity of their inner substance (Schiller called them "naive" poets), he mentioned Gerhart Hauptmann. Well, yes, Hauptmann. He should have, to be equal to the grandness of the question, named Aeschylus or Sophocles or Shakespeare. And then Brecht said: "Assuming you are reading an excellent political novel, and after you have finished it, you learn it was by Lenin. You would change your mind, would you not, about Lenin as well as about the novel, and not in favor of either." Thus speaks a politically committed poet, but a poet happily not committed enough to make his intelligence immune from the ironies with which the relationship between literature and social responsibility is so amply afflicted.

Walter Benjamin, at that time, had just written his essay on Kafka, and asked Brecht to read it. For weeks there was no response. In the same conversation in which Brecht spoke of the imperfections of his political commitment as a poet, Kafka was at last talked about. It emerged that Brecht thought he was a great writer—"like Kleist, Grabbe, or Büchner"; and, like these, ultimately a failure, one who suffered shipwreck. Why? At this point Brecht proved to be an extraordinarily perspicacious critic. He answered: Because Kafka was meant to be what Confucius

was: he had the disposition and the gift of a great teacher, a prophet; yet as there was for Kafka—and here I enlarge a little on Benjamin's sketchy diary jottings—no society to teach or prophetically to inspire, his Confucian parables became "literature," "mere" literature. ("If I were a Chinaman," wrote Kafka once to Felice, and "but at bottom I am a Chinaman.") The parables grew into "art," even into novels, and thus lost their ultimate seriousness. Yet from the beginning, probably on account of the historical absurdity of a teacher without a school to teach, of a prophet without a people to guide, they showed signs of wanting to become what they did become: literature. "They were never quite transparent," said Brecht. This is also the reason why the apparent precision of Kafka's style is so deceptive: it is the precision of an exact dream confusingly dreamt in a place between prophecy and art.

There are not many interpretations of Kafka of which it seems certain that Kafka himself would have found them revealing or even interesting. This is one. When Brecht said it, he did not and could not know that Kafka was indeed tortured all his life by the consciousness of the two half-realities of which his world appeared to be made up—without the two half-realities ever amounting to anything felt to be wholly real. There was the half that was his writing, that hateful unreal thing to which, as he once put it in a letter to his fiancée, he was bound with invisible chains; and there was the sphere of his "real" responsibilities: his profession which he hated, his city which he much disliked, the woman he would not marry, the house he would not inhabit, and the garden he was not to plant. There was, in fact, an "unreal" literature and an "unreal" life. What, after all, must be called his life, seemed to him without meaning and therefore unreal; to find meaning, he gave himself to literature—like someone, as he once said, who, equipped with only a lamp and pen and paper, withdraws forever into the deep, dark vault of a cellar. But as in the cellar, in his tomb, there was no life, literature too became meaningless. It is an extreme case of that laceration which, on the one hand, has ever more acutely raised the question of the writer's responsibility and, on the other hand, has made it ever harder to answer it. For where "meaning" and "reality," "literature" and "life," are felt to be irreconcilable, the one can hardly be responsible to the other; responsibility presupposes correspondence. In order for literature to be truly responsible, there would have to be such correspondence; and it would have to be the correspondence between language and reality—a correspondence whose questioning appears to have become the foremost concern of both our philosophers and our writers.

What to us has become so deeply questionable

was a certainty for Confucius. When once his disciples asked him what he would do first if he had to administer a country, he answered: "The first would be to correct language." "Surely," they said, "this has nothing to do with the matter. Why should language be corrected?" The Master's answer was: "If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and arts will decay; if morals and arts decay, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence language must not be allowed to deteriorate. This matters above everything." What a grand definition of the writer's social responsibility, and what confident faith in the very correspondence between language and reality, and therefore between literature and life! Shall we ever regain the confidence of both this definition and this faith? It is the very condition of literary responsibility, and on it depends the future of our liberal education.

THE years 1889-1955—this is the span of time over which the *Letters of Thomas Mann* were written. They record, among a multitude of other and not quite so grave concerns, also his progress from the position of the "unpolitical" artist to what he took to be a political platform. Progress? The trouble is that during those decades the terms "political" and "unpolitical" "lost their names," and if not their names, their meaning. What was meant by politics in 1900, by 1940 had ceased to be applicable to the public conduct of nations, above all the German nation. In German, certainly, the word "politics" was by that time an archaism. When Thomas Mann claimed to be an unpolitical writer, the claim made good sense and was, moreover, supported by the very cast of his sensibility. It was destined to be violated by the violence of the age; and gently chiding Hermann Hesse in 1945 for his refusal to be "political," Thomas Mann sang out of tune, but only because the tune was no longer singable. For truly, what can "politics" mean to a mind as fine as his—coming face to face with what to his humanity must have looked like the failure of the human enterprise? Thomas Mann, with the great courage and often with the rhetoric of great moral resolution, avoided saying so as a man speaking in letters to other men. Yet his writing said it in *Doctor Faustus*, the novel that cancels man's heavenly apotheosis at the end of Goethe's *Faust*, takes back the celebration of the "subjective harmony," the harmony between soul and world, in the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and unweaves the configurations of faith in that carpet of Confucius.

The Azhdanov Tailors

A Story

Christina Stead

JAN KALOJAN organized some eight thousand Yiddish-speaking tailors in Poland. Before that, they had belonged to the Bund, an old-fashioned organization. Kalojan had learned Yiddish to do so because many of the tailors were Jewish and were not friendly with the Poles. The Jewish workers were tailors, carpenters, and factory workers. Some were very religious and wore the gaberdine; but the factory workers, who for the most part had to cut their beards and hair, were regarded with some contempt by the truly religious ones and called "half-Jews." It happened that Jan Kalojan himself, son of a rich mine owner and of a Viennese society girl, was really a half-Jew.

He told Otto Bauer, the Socialist leader, that he would organize the Jewish workers. Bauer said to him, "No, you will never do that: you have bitten off more than you can chew, you will lose your teeth in it." Jan was a very young man then, short, strong, blue-eyed, redheaded, and he had not lost any teeth, but that was the expression used. Otto Bauer said, "If you get together four thousand workers I will come and speak to them"—for fewer than that he would not stir, for he was a great man. "How will you do it, Kalojan?" "In many ways. When I was organizing the printers, I wrote a story about printers and they printed it. I will now write a marionette play. I go about Europe juggling concepts and I will write a play in which concepts are dolls. There will be labor-value, surplus-value, the exploitation of labor; and there must be a little love. That is how they sell books. Then I must learn to smile—I blow up, I shout; that's not right. A smile conquers everything and everyone. A sense of reality is perhaps not as good as a sweet smile such as my sister Mrs. Rock has. They would not let Jewish orphans into the orphanage and I became angry; but she said, Let me go and talk to them. She went, she talked to them, she smiled at them and they allowed some Jewish orphans into the home."

Jan Kalojan organized eight thousand Jewish workers.

One day he went to speak at Azhdanov, a place

near Cracow. This small town was run by religious leaders who owned a paint-works producing ochre paint, a factory making hessian sacks, some tailoring and tobacco workshops, and all the businesses in town. They ran the churches and were town councillors.

Kalojan had a new tailored suit, gloves, a flower in his buttonhole, and a heavy stick. He took a first-class ticket; so that when he got out at the Azhdanov station, the three or four workmen who had come to meet him were standing at the other end of the platform. The first thing he saw was a big, elderly woman with a figure like round pots of all sizes, put together with a wig, a shawl, and the black clothing of respectable old women. She was at least forty and she seemed aged to the young man. With astonishment and a little scorn, he saw her rush up to him and throw herself on her knees before him. She pulled at his trousers and coat and at her own shawl and began to sigh and call out, "Aie-aie-aie!" Tears ran down her face. "Oh, please don't ruin me," she cried out, "don't take away my life, don't ruin us and bring the killers, have mercy on us, think what you are doing—have pity! You must have a heart; you can't be as bad as that; think what you are doing to us all, poor men, women, and children—don't bring this scandal into our beautiful town. We are happy here—just go home and think it over! You're a young man. Go back by the next train without taking another step and you will be glad later on! Think of the wickedness of bringing the black terror here, where everyone is so happy! Will you bring this disgrace on my daughter? Oh, go away before the worst happens—"

Kalojan put his stick under his arm and began to move sideways out of her grasp. He thought she might be mad; he thought she might be cunning; he did not know what it was. He was angry and thought to himself, "If they want to try to influence me, why don't they send a beautiful young girl, not a fat old woman who ought to hide in shame." But he hardly thought anything; he had no time for her. At that moment, the workmen who were waiting for him, came up to him and said, "This woman is the rabbi's wife and they have told everyone that you are coming here to organize a pogrom."

CHRISTINA STEAD, the distinguished Australian writer, is best known for her novel, *The Man Who Loved Children*. This is her first appearance in COMMENTARY.

They went out of the station and warned him that it was going to be difficult. Kalojan had begun to organize the Jewish workers in Azhdanov. To begin with, that is some time before, he had gone to a little café where they sat and read newspapers. He spoke first to one, then to another, then to two or three; and the workers gradually fell away from the synagogue. This whole thing had been begun before his time, because of the work in the factories.

As they walked from the station, the workers, one of whom was named Henryk Portnoy, told him that there had been bills posted on the churches, the synagogue, and the walls of houses saying, "A certain Kalojan—" or "One Kalojan—is coming on such and such a day from Cracow to cause a pogrom," and much more of this; and it continued, "All are warned to stay away from him," and much more. Kalojan, who was at that time about twenty-three, a fearless and bold talker, took no notice of what he heard, but sent the workmen away to tell the others he had come; and to hurry them up to the meeting-place where they would all be together and in force. Portnoy and the others were unwilling at first. "The town is ready to burst into flames. The priests, the rabbi, and their friends have incited the people to violence and done things with their own hands." The books from the workers' library had been taken out, torn into little pieces, and burned; the workers' center was damaged; any people who stood about and looked on were dispersed.

But Kalojan now went on toward the center of town near the synagogue where the Jewish workers' center also was, because he did not mean the town councillors and the priests to keep this town, entirely a working-class town, in servitude. Holding his stick in his hand he went on, determined.

As he walked, he noticed two or three little children who ran around him: they were poor with their shirts out at the back; that is, very small and some had bare feet. They ran around him and pulled him. Then older children came, nine or ten who ran around him and followed him; but he took no notice and went on walking, though they tugged at his stick. He put it under his arm and buttoned up his coat. Then still older ones came and he took no notice of these either; and then youths and young men and men in their thirties fell in, from the doorways, or yards, or side-streets, and by then he knew it was an organized demonstration against him; but he kept marching on, thinking, This means nothing to me; I can manage this; and in fact, he felt no particular fear.

But the crowd grew and grew; they opened up before him so that he could keep on walking, but they squeezed him on both sides and pushed him

at the back so that he could not move his arms and could scarcely breathe. Soon he felt them sticking needles into him, sacking needles which were used to sew up the hessian sacks in one of the factories; he felt cold and heard the cloth being torn; he heard shears snipping. They hurt him and tore at his new suit of good material. He kept marching, though now he knew it was serious and he wondered if they meant him to arrive there naked. He was carried onward and soon had to pass the synagogue, where now the crowd was very thick, an excited crowd, shouting and threatening; and now he could no longer move but was being crushed slowly in on all sides. He was a short man, though sturdy.

He now saw some of his friends, high up on a wall and some on a scaffolding. The Jewish workers were also carpenters and builders in this town. Suddenly two of them dived into the crowd of people headfirst with their arms spread, as if they were going for a swim, but they could not get to him. At the same moment, a Town Councillor came out with friends all round him, on the steps of the synagogue where he could be seen; and loudly, with his arms out, he cursed the intruder from Cracow, and shouted at the crowd of people who were mostly Jewish, telling them Kalojan had come to start a pogrom. Some people tried to start fighting, but the crowd was too thick.

Next, several policemen pushed their way in and arrested the man from Cracow for causing a disturbance. The police knew very little and the Town Councillor was a religious leader, a factory owner, and a very rich man. He was obeyed, even though Jan Kalojan protested, saying that he had a right to visit Azhdanov and a right to speak to his friends and that he himself knew people in Cracow more influential than this Town Councillor. He said he had bothered no one but had himself been attacked. He was taken to jail still protesting, and now he looked disreputable, with scratched face and torn clothes; but he insisted upon writing out telegrams to the Chief of Police in Cracow, to Victor Adler and Otto Bauer in Vienna, and to the lawyers who looked after his family estates. His father having died, he was now, though so young, chief of the Kalojan family council; and the family owned mines, warehouses, country and town property, and was even well-connected at the court in Vienna.

Kalojan was not sure of help, but he thought he might impress them. The police became anxious and agreed to let him go to the station if he would go by small back alleys. Jan said, "They will all think like you, they will think of back alleys; so you must take me by the main streets."

Then they wanted to put him in a carriage; but he refused. He said, "I am going to walk, I want everyone to see how you treat a man who comes to organize the workers." The police were anxious for their own skins, but he forced them to walk along with him to the station.

Near the station, the back streets and the main street converged and the organized crowd which, just as he had foreseen, was expecting him along the back lanes, saw him passing along at a distance and rushed forward yelling. But he got on to the platform, and though they had some time to wait for the train, the police protected him. Meantime, he could hear the threats and insults shouted outside, "The workers' friend is an *elegantchik*, but doubtless his shirt has not been washed for weeks!" This was their idea of a deadly insult, suggested by their own lives. "Now that things are a little hot, he is taking a first-class ticket back home." This was true, of course. Kalojan was not angry or bitter, he was reasonable; he knew how all this had been arranged and why these things were said. Besides, he was upset about his suit. A charming young girl sat in the ticket office. He asked her if she could do something about it. She borrowed a needle from one of the demonstrators outside the station, found some thread and sewed up the worst tears in his costume. "See what the tailors' workers have done to my suit," he said to her.

WHEN Kalojan returned to Cracow, he found an excited crowd of workers at the station and in front of them was his sister, Mrs. Rock, very pale, almost white, looking terribly anxious. She rushed up to him and kissed him to make sure he was there, safe and sound, for he looked very strange; and in fact the news had got around that he had been killed. A great deal was already known about the demonstration.

But this was not all. Kalojan was arrested in Cracow at the instance of the same Azhdanov people and held in jail for trying to make trouble against the Jews. He was brought to trial. He pleaded not guilty and related all the circumstances, so that it was clear what had happened; but the rulers of the small town of Azhdanov had got stupid people together and suborned witnesses, among them a servant girl, a religious fanatic who cried in court and testified that he had called out, "At them, hunt them, kill them, kill the Jews"; and others who testified that he had said, "Loot the Jewish rich men"; and others again who said they had heard him shout, "Burn the Jewish workers' center!" The proof was that the workers' center had been looted and the books had been burned. There were many such witnesses.

At last the judge, who was a man of Kalojan's own society and knew him and Mrs. Rock quite well, had him taken to a private room. The judge came to him and said, "Look, sir, you plead one way and twenty-five witnesses have come from Azhdanov to testify to the contrary. It is not a question of justice here but of preponderant testimony. If you can take other measures, you had better do so." Kalojan realized he would not get a judgment and that he had better follow this

advice. The case was postponed for a day or so. Kalojan was allowed to go to local people, authorities, and friends. He found out that some of the witnesses had various concessions, a tobacco concession and so on; so Kalojan arranged through his friends for the witnesses to be threatened: "Your concession will be withdrawn if you do not take back your testimony and complaint."

The thing was settled in this way; and Kalojan was told he could get damages for his ruined suit. He said, "I have other suits, but the workers in Azhdanov have not got other books." The Councillors, priests, and witnesses were obliged to restitute the burned volumes. It was amusing to see them sending to Cracow for the socialist classics; and the workers watched at the station to see that the parcels of books came and were not somehow lost on the way.

PORTNOY, one of the four at the station, went to the United States some time later and became a tailor in a town in upper New York State.

Some years after the beginning of the Nazi terror, he heard from another immigrant tailor that Kalojan himself had fled from the Nazis and was living in New York City.

It took Portnoy some time to find out where Kalojan was living, because in the long years between, Kalojan, now a man of sixty, had lived all over the world. At last he got his address, and at the end of a year, during which he saved, he went down to New York by train and came to a side street off upper Broadway where he found a big courtyard and an apartment house in it. On the fourth floor he found the number he had been given and rang. After a long time, the door was opened and there stood a strange old man with thick orange-colored hair and a face that was entirely cherry-red. His eyeballs were red too and in them pupils of such a startling blue that they seemed to rush out at the visitor and stand before him like two floating globes on two golden threads of light. There was a strong smell of gas in the place. "Come in," said the strange old man, "the gas will go away soon; I opened all the windows when I heard the doorbell."

He was dressed in a frayed cream-colored suit with a silk shirt of French style, in thin red, blue, and black stripes, and he had onyx cuff links.

Portnoy was embarrassed. He could not understand how the man could have such a complexion and he did not know who he was; but he soon found out that he was Jan Kalojan and had received Portnoy's letter. This old man was nothing like the young man he had known, except that he looked Polish, and that young man too had had startling blue eyes and orange-colored hair.

"I did not recognize you," said Portnoy. "How is your sister, Mrs. Rock?"

"It's a curious thing that you came just now,"

said Kalojan. "I fell asleep in the kitchen and I was just going to put a goose to roast, but I forgot and left the gas on in the oven and I had not even lighted it. You see, I live alone."

They sat down by an open window, while Kalojan brought his visitor something to drink: "Are you American now? Do you like Scotch? Or sherry or Campari? And I have slivovitz."

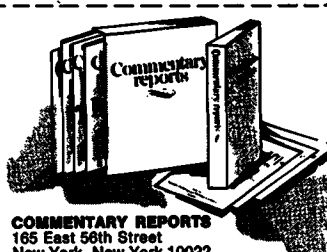
He bustled about, an experienced host.

"My sister, Mrs. Rock, died some years ago. She was picking up coals for orphan children. It was a bitter winter day and as you know, she had got the rich people to found an orphan asylum, but there was not much coal, so she used to go picking up coals along the railway, where they fell off the railway trucks. It wasn't necessary for her to do that, she could have bought the coal; but through worrying about the orphans she had come to behave like an old pauper woman. That day she caught cold and in four days she died. Half an hour ago I was thinking about her and about all the others who have died. I just

received news that my sister who married a Polish Jew in Lodz, my brother, and others in my family were sent off and murdered in the Nazi murder trains. My brother had a little daughter whom he loved and who died in childhood; he never recovered from it, but for the rest of his life, which is ended now, he was gloomy and apathetic. I am not like that; but I was thinking of them just half an hour ago, and that is how I forgot about the goose and left the gas jets on. I'm glad you came. I do not intend to die."

"It has taken me more than a year to save up the train fare," said Portnoy.

"You can call me a tailor, I suppose, but I do mending and cleaning mostly, in a workshop that looks right on the railroad. The cinders come in on the clothes; you understand, it's an unsuitable location. But now I know you are here, I have something to live for and I promise you that every year I'll come down to see you; and there is a friend of mine who knew you in Azhdanov who will come down, too, perhaps at Easter."



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Memoirs of a Fraternity Man

Joseph Epstein

I RECENTLY learned that my college fraternity, Phi Epsilon Pi, has become defunct, its chapters all over America having closed their doors and locked them for good, and I found myself unexpectedly sad at the news. I say "unexpectedly" because, insofar as I have thought about them at all, I rather disliked fraternities in general and my own in particular I was sure I despised. Fourteen years ago, at the end of my freshman year at the University of Illinois, I moved out of Phi Ep (Psi Chapter) at the first opportunity and into an apartment. Not long afterward I was to leave the University of Illinois, at which point I lost all interest in fraternities whatever. A few months ago, however, I happened to mention to a very perceptive woman that I had spent a year at the University of Illinois and belonged to a fraternity there. "Don't tell me which one," she said, "I'll bet I can guess. You were a Phi Ep, one of the elite effete." Appallingly correct! Appalling because of all the various views I have of myself—and their range is extravagant—that of a fraternity man is perhaps least prominent of all. Phi Epsilon Pi is now dead. Its song is over but the melody lingers on—apparently even in me.

The song itself began fifteen winters ago at Chicago's 12th Street Illinois Central Railway Station, where, as a mid-year graduate of a Chicago public high school, I was setting off to college. The decision to go "downstate," as the University of Illinois campus in the dismal twin-cities of Champaign and Urbana is still called, was an utterly conventional one. At that time of smaller college enrollments, the state university had to take anyone who had a high-school diploma, but in fact many people who finished well in the upper reaches of their high-school graduating classes went to the University of Illinois anyhow. For many of us, most of whose parents had not themselves gone to college, the University of Illinois was about as far as our horizons extended. Going to college was not then—though it was fast becoming—the automatic business it now is for the majority of the children of the

middle class. It was a matter still in the realm of decision, and while I and almost all my friends chose to go, we did so with the greatest possible seriousness. To demonstrate that seriousness most of us chose the glummost of majors: accounting, marketing, economics. I myself could not go quite that far, but I was not above the need to establish my purposefulness, which I did by informing my relatives and parents' friends that I was going downstate to study something called "pre-law."

Implicit in the decision to go downstate to college was the decision to join a fraternity. To do otherwise was very nearly unthinkable. The University of Illinois was then one of the largest and most active "Greek" campuses in the country. Fraternities and sororities not merely abounded but gave the place its tone, coloration, and (finally) character. To choose not to join a fraternity, to live instead as an "independent" was, at the University of Illinois, to cut oneself off on almost every level: socially, academically, even gastronomically—to consign oneself to a life as lonely, colorless, and sterile as the single piece of bologna that went into the sandwiches served for lunch at the men's independent dorms.

There were, of course, a great many independents at the University of Illinois, though I suspect that in the vast majority of cases their independence was enforced by financial limitations, by social inadequacies, by simple discrimination against them on the part of fraternities and sororities. I was not myself independent by temperament nor did I have independence thrust upon me in any of these negative ways. My father, a successful businessman, had made clear that he would pay every cent involved in my education, and he was not about to boggle at the extra cost of a fraternity for his son. Having gone to an intensely social high school, one so divided off into scores of clubs, fraternities, and sororities as to make it almost a mini-University of Illinois, I suffered none of the social awkwardness, or inexperience, that might have kept me out of a college fraternity.

Still, not one to take chances, as the train pulled out of the 12th Street Station for Champaign, I was dressed for approval. Consider the outfit: a brown Harris tweed jacket, a maroon

JOSEPH EPSTEIN's articles and reviews appear regularly in these pages. Readers will recall his earlier memoir, "Coming of Age in Chicago," which appeared in our number of December 1969.

cashmere sweater, a careful rep tie over a white button-down oxford cloth shirt, cambridge gray trousers with a small buckle in the back, and plain-toed cordovan shoes. The semester before a good friend of mine had been blackballed from a leading Jewish fraternity at the University of Michigan for, among other things, or so I thought, his rather individual style of dress, which included a penchant for white sweat socks. My own socks were black and rode high up on the calf.

Virtually all fraternities were, of course, segregated by religion or social class, and within each group there were fairly rigid hierarchies of status. Phi Ep was one of the elite Jewish fraternities. Its scholastic rating was high, its record in intramural sports was excellent, and its showings in Stunt Show (the campus musical-comedy competition), Spring Carnival, and other university events were superior. But in larger part, the fraternity's status derived from the social background of its membership, or rather from that of a handful of its members. The collective identity of some fraternities might be based on a single member, usually an athlete. Around this time, for example, Sigma Chi seemed to be totally epitomized in the person of Hiles Stout, a football player from Peoria, Illinois. Stout was Sigma Chi: small-town, blond crew-cut, burly, something less than highly cerebral. Phi Ep was not so conveniently summed up in one person. But the typical member would have come from the Chicago area, probably either from one of the more prosperous Jewish suburbs to the north or Lake Shore Drive. He would be slender, well-turned-out—his principal source of haberdashery being Brooks Brothers—and with hair worn short and parted to one side, in the style then known as the "Princeton." While his father probably made his money working for someone else, or had a small business of his own, he himself would be headed for the professions—medicine, law, dentistry, or accountancy. There would be a self-assurance about him, a casualness that came from a sense of being at ease in the world. And the truth is, he really was at ease in the world; he knew where he wanted to go and he knew precisely how to get there.

The Phi Eps admired few things more than casualness, the difficult trick made to look easy, the conventional move stylishly executed. So, in those days, did I. Although I never seriously considered pledging any other fraternity, and although I was flattered by the hard rush they put on me, as a matter of form I showed some hesitation about accepting their pledge pin.

THERE were twelve of us in all in the pledge class that year and for the most part we were a fairly similar lot; or at any rate most of us dressed and talked roughly alike and seemed to share roughly similar values. Most

of us, but not all. The twelfth member of the pledge class, Marv Schmidt, was another story. Not to put too fine a point on it, his clothes were wrong, his style was wrong, he really didn't, as the saying went, "quite fit in." Schmidt was an engineering student, and the reason, the sole reason, he was asked to pledge Phi Ep was that one of the members, an upper classman from a small town in Arkansas who also studied engineering, wanted an engineer for the pledge class and was able to prevail. But Schmidt excepted, we were the pick of the pack, the best there was, the most intensely sought after candidates for the Jewish fraternities to come downstate in February of 1955, and there was pride in that.

Once settled in, pledging was not as irksome as I feared it might be. Unlike most of the other fraternities on campus, the Phi Eps did not paddle their pledges—a sign of their superior civility? But at least one pledge was assigned to each table in the dining room and we were all instructed in a rigid set of table manners: knife placed across upper right portion of plate, blade turned in; all food both passed and received across the body, and so forth. Five nights a week we were herded back into the dining room at seven-thirty for study hours, which lasted till ten. Each morning two of us were assigned wake-call, which involved waking the members—gently, oh, ever so gently—for their morning classes. After lunch and often after classes we ran errands: picking up members' laundry or dropping it off, fetching a book from the library, buying a packet of envelopes, or picking up clothes from the dry cleaner's. Saturday mornings we did a general housecleaning.

Although pledges slept in a common dormitory on the top floor of the fraternity house, each of us was also assigned to a member's room, where we kept our clothes and books. I drew Sidney Straus. Sidney was the son of a multimillionaire, a self-made man who owned, along with other holdings, what was then the premiere hotel in Miami Beach and a controlling interest in one of Chicago's major banks. "I'm glad you're going to be my roommate," Sidney said when I arrived at his room with my books and suitcases. "I was worried I'd get that German kid, Schmitz, or whatever his goddamn name is." Sidney proved an amiable roommate, being, as it turned out, rarely there. A graduating senior, engaged and soon to be married, he seemed to spend most of his time aloft in airplanes, carrying out obscure, though clearly not petty, errands for his father's various businesses. Within less than ten years, he would be president of his father's bank in Chicago. From photographs that appeared from time to time in the Chicago press, he seemed not to age at all—at thirty-five, as at twenty-one, he still looked fifty-four. Short, pudgy, already nearly bald in his last year at college, it was as if the fates, in endowing Sidney so well financially, had exacted in exchange his youth.

But then nearly all the seniors among the Phi Eps seemed almost excessively mature. A kind of heavy seriousness, thick with sobriety, was the model not merely aspired to but generally achieved. The Phi Ep seniors *were* older men, and though only just past adolescence touched with the gift—curse?—of perpetual early middle age. Harold Goldberg, the president of Phi Ep at that time, had all the playfulness of a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers. Dark and extremely earnest, he wore the same sweaters and washpants that everyone else did during the week, but never seemed quite convincing in them. It was only in a suit, and at that rather a severe business suit, that he looked at home and really comfortable.

Once I began living at the fraternity, it began to take on a different, more variegated, less idealized, look. A common fraternity phenomenon in those days was "the closet case," a member who had either been left as a legacy from some Phi Ep older brother or who simply represented a mistake in judgment, a lapse of discrimination. These unfortunates were asked not to show up at certain important occasions—rush weeks, big dances, exchanges with prestigious sororities. Phi Ep had no formal closet cases, though it did have a number of members whom it chose not to feature too prominently. These ranged from Bernie ("The Animal") Lefkovitz to Kenny Gaynor. I liked The Animal from the start: hairy, rough, he was what he was, with no airs about him. Kenny Gaynor was something else again—a fop of such extraordinary dimension, a character so clearly made of cardboard, that he would be unbelievable in the pages of a novel. Soon after I had unpacked my things in Sidney Straus's room, Kenny came by to inspect my ties, which hung on a rack against the door. "Not bad at all," he commented with gravity. "You should see Schmidt's." And here he made a face—a wrinkling of the nose, a puckering of the mouth—appropriate to the swallowing of some small vile animal. My own foulards, challis, reps, I should gauge, rated from him somewhere between a C+ and a B—.

PHI EP also had a number of members who did not come from Chicago, and were therefore known as the "out-of-towners." There were not many such members, at most they comprised perhaps 15 per cent of the total, and in general they tended to fall a cut below the Phi Eps who came from Chicago. They were from such places as Paragould (Arkansas), Minneapolis, and Memphis; from as far away as New York City and from as nearby as the Illinois towns of Springfield, Mattoon, and Peoria. The out-of-towners were thought of as having a special cachet for the fraternity; they made it seem somehow less parochial. Since no one knew very much about them, they seemed, most of them, to be trailing along rather extravagant pasts. The

members from Paragould and Memphis, for example, were said to have been all-state football players in Arkansas and Tennessee. One member from New York—he was in the pledge class preceding mine—claimed to have been offered a bonus to pitch for a major-league baseball team as well as to have scored higher than anyone else in the history of certain Regents' exams. He was a liar of such magnitude, such purity, such transparency, that one had to strain really to dislike him. Although a pre-med student, he took great pains never to be caught studying, but would announce the highest grades nonetheless. He would return from the simplest coffee date or movie with his face covered with lipstick in a kind of Jackson Pollock effect. Phi Ep in fact was loaded with pre-meds, and on the whole they were a dreary lot. The pressure of getting into medical school showed badly on all of them. Having to bend themselves to this single purpose so early in life, they quickly grew dull, and some of them quite mean.

So far as cultural interests were concerned, there was bridge and there was musical comedy, especially musical comedy. In those days a madness for musical comedy was common not merely in Phi Ep but in the Midwest generally. I used to think it a Jewish phenomenon, but in fact it was more widespread, touching, at one time or another, almost everyone of the middle class. Hard-eyed businessmen, Mafiosi, crushing mothers—all were enormous suckers for a musical. It was not unusual for the well-to-do in Chicago to take a week or two off for a trip to New York, and see nine or ten musical comedies in a row. Men in the used-car, finance, or steel business, men otherwise without the least grain of sentimentality, would sit there with their wives, eyes wide, jaws slack, entranced, as boys and girls traipsed across the stage shrieking "Pajama Game! Pajama Game!" Then they would see the same shows, or at least the more successful of them, again when their road companies came through Chicago, and comment on the relative merits of the two different casts. Then they would buy the albums, which they listened to over and over again.

Phi Ep's zeal for musical comedy was of a piece with all this. For our pledge dance, we did an elaborate revue called "New Faces of 58.50" which we worked on for about six weeks, honing our thin parodies of the original *New Faces* songs into bland perfection. But this was as nothing compared to the fraternity's effort for Stunt Show. For this production, Phi Ep teamed up with a sorority to compete against every other fraternity and sorority on campus for the best performance of a musical-comedy routine. Although the competition did not take place until late in the fall, rehearsals got started the previous summer. Once the school year began, those Phi Eps involved in the show would troop

over to our partner sorority every night for further rehearsals. As the competition drew closer, weekends, too, were taken up with rehearsals. No matter which sorority was involved, Phi Ep invariably made the finals.

More was at stake, it soon became clear, than the Stunt Show competition itself. The hope was to win the damn thing so that the following year Phi Ep could have as its partner one of the great Wright Street sorority houses. Wright Street faced the campus, and lining it were the sororities of Kappa Alpha Theta, Pi Beta Phi, and Chi Omega, all of them prestigious and none of them Jewish. Was it only fifteen years ago that America seemed so very much a country of small towns and so very much under Protestant domination? It was indeed, and the plan at Phi Ep, though it was never worked out in a dank basement on a pool table under a bare light bulb, was to sing and dance its way into the heart of America, or—what was much the same thing—into the living room of the Theta house.

In case I make myself sound superior to all this, I should emphasize that I was as good and obedient a pledge as any of my pledge brothers and no less strenuously wished to become a member. It was with a longing eye that I looked upon the pins and paddles and beer mugs and other accoutrements decorated with the fraternity's crest and Greek letters (supplied by the Balfour Company, Inc., makers of fraternal jewelry and accessories). Like everyone else, I did as I was told and I submitted as meekly as everyone else to the humiliations to which a pledge was subjected.

One such humiliation that stands out is the time we pledges were awakened late at night and marched down from our dormitory to the living room by Al Sampson, a member from Arkansas who was known for his rich appetite for country ribaldry. We expected the worst. The worst, which we had all heard about, was something called with brutal simplicity "The Meat," a very rude exercise having to do with getting a raw piece of steak up and down a staircase while naked and without the use of one's hands. It was a stunt calculated to bring about solidarity throughout the pledge class by humiliating each of us in precise democratic measure.

After lining us up in the living room, Sampson, with a great show of anger, began with verbal abuse. We were a terrible pledge class, he shrieked, one of the worst ever to come through the house, and he, for one, was goddamn sick of us. We would shape the hell up, fast, or answer to him. He walked down the line, blasting each of us in turn. Then he put us through calisthenics: push-ups, sit-ups, deep knee bends. Next we were told to strip. We all did so, except for Billy Schwartz. The son of a Chicago fight promoter, Billy, though small, was a very tough kid; normally even-tempered, he had a notably low tolerance for taking insults. As the rest of us

stood there, vulnerable in our nakedness, Billy announced that he didn't care what happened, he wasn't about to take his pajamas off. Sampson went red in the face. He said he was going to leave the room for ten minutes, during which time the rest of us had better convince our pledge brother to strip. If we failed to do so, he could promise us that our lives in Phi Ep would be made more miserable than any of us would care to contemplate. Ten minutes later Sampson returned to find us, Billy included, unanimously naked.

Part of being in Phi Ep, or for that matter in any fraternity, involved going along with the game—and this included members as well as pledges. Ronnie Klein, an upper-classman, was large and lumbering. At twenty-one he had an old man's mind inside a middle-aged man's body. He was the son of a rich man who had extensive holdings in real estate in Chicago. Less conservative by choice than tired by temperament, he never made a move of any kind without first elaborately plotting it out. Yet even Klein, surely the least romantic of figures, when he became pinned—and to become "pinned" in those days meant one was engaged to be engaged—went through the traditional "pinning serenade" like everyone else in the fraternity. Standing in front of the Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority house across the street from Phi Ep, Klein stepped out before the rest of us, and in a voice more appropriate to the reading of a personal bankruptcy statement, sang about how Gibraltar might crumble and the Rockies might tumble but his love was here to stay.

As the semester wore on toward final week, pledging eased up, and everyone began concentrating on grades. One night we pledges were called into the regular Monday night fraternity meeting for a bull session in which each of us was told, singly, of our inadequacies, of how disappointingly we had turned out, of how far short we had fallen of the Phi Ep measure. The week before finals we went through our last ordained ritual of this period, singling out the member who had been hardest on us as pledges throughout the semester. One evening before dinner we grabbed our man, dragged him out behind the house, tied him up, and dumped pancake syrup, sand, and feathers on him, as the rest of the Phi Eps looked on. Then came the week of final exams, after which we all, members and pledges, left the campus for the summer.

THE fall rush at the start of the following semester was, of course, much more hectic than the winter one had been, and the traffic of potential pledges coming through Phi Ep was thick. The fraternity pretty much knew which incoming freshmen it wanted from Chicago, though it was still sitting in judgment on certain marginal types and kept on the

lookout for out-of-town freshmen that no one had any line on. The rushees came in regular sessions: some remarkably confident and poised, others nervous in their eagerness to please. They were met by the Phi Eps in the foyer of the house, walked into the living room, shown through the upstairs floors. But all the while, it was they, not Phi Ep, who were on display.

The evenings of rush week were devoted to blackballing sessions—or “spot” meetings, as they were called, for the word “blackball” was never used. At these meetings it was decided who would be offered a bid to pledge and who would not. The meetings ran well into the night, sometimes breaking up at three or four in the morning. As might be imagined, some very fancy talk was involved, with everyone putting the finest possible point on everything he said. “I don’t wish to reiterate what Mickey Schwartz just finished saying,” a representative comment might run, “but it seems to me this kid is, on balance, hardly Phi Ep material.” Which was of course just another way of saying what was apparent to all but could not be said straight out: that a rushee was too ugly, too garishly dressed, too aggressive, too shy, too broken out, too “Jewish,” or too something else which put him beyond the Phi Ep pale. Kids were rejected for much the same reasons that I and almost everyone else who sat in on these meetings had rejected the other fraternities on campus to pledge Phi Ep. There was very little subtlety about the procedure—one either approximated the Phi Ep mold or fell hopelessly, irretrievably, short of it.

That rush week presented only one noteworthy incident, which involved the blackballing of a “legacy.” This particular candidate wasn’t, strictly speaking, in that category—technically, to be a legacy either one’s father or older brother or brothers had to have been a member. His brother-in-law, however, was a Phi Ep who had graduated about three years before and some of the upper-classmen present at the meeting had known him. At one point, one of them telephoned the brother-in-law in Chicago, then returned to announce that he would be driving down that night—such was the urgency of the matter—to talk on behalf of the blackballed rushee, his wife’s younger brother. The major claim against the candidate seemed to be an insufficiency of distinctly admirable qualities. The opposition would take the floor and ceaselessly reiterate, “I don’t wish to reiterate, but this kid doesn’t show me anything.” Finally, sometime around three in the morning, the brother-in-law arrived. Dark, with a close-cropped haircut, and wearing a light blue cashmere sweater over a white button-down collar shirt, he was still vintage Phi Ep. After being introduced to the meeting at large, he spoke of his young brother-in-law’s eagerness to be a Phi Ep. If he were not asked to pledge the fraternity, he said,

he very probably would not remain downstate for more than a semester. He had chosen to come to school here precisely because of Phi Ep. He was exactly the sort of kid that Phi Ep could make a man of, which after all was one of the things the fraternity was about. Everything, in short, was brought up but the main point: the kid would be unthinkable if he were not a legacy; but, goddamn it, he *was* a legacy! At the next vote, taken while his brother-in-law was out of the room, it was decided that the bid would be extended after all. Tradition had held, and we all shuffled off to bed.

A few weeks after the pledge class of ’59 had been assembled and school had gotten underway, my own pledge class was awakened late one night and told that we were on “hell week.” During the seven days that followed we got almost no sleep, we were made to wear a suit and tie to class, and were allowed out of our suits only to get into work clothes suitable for executing our hell-week project: building a restraining wall roughly three feet high and seventy or so feet long behind the fraternity house. When we were not either in class or working on the wall, we were locked into various rooms, sometimes separately, sometimes together, where we were left to study a small, maroon leather-bound book containing the fraternity’s history. At odd hours throughout the week we were arbitrarily shifted about from room to room; we were shouted at, rather than talked to; members who had been friendly now froze us out. The week droned on, dreary and wearying.

EARLY Sunday morning, at the end of the week, our initiation was at hand. Phi Ep’s ceremony was not, as I have since learned, as elaborate as that of other fraternities, or especially of some sororities, where incoming members were said to have been moved by the ritual to the point of tears. At Phi Ep we were brought down to the living room one-by-one, blindfolded. When the blindfold was removed, we found ourselves in a candlelit room with all the curtains drawn. There, as each of my pledge brothers would do, and as every member in that room had done before me, I was put through the litany of Phi Ep’s history. I was asked to name its founding members, to recite its historic dates and events, to reel off the names of its various chapters round the country. At the end of it I was told that I had done execrably, and then instructed to enter the chapter room, a small room off the main one which generally served as the site of all-night bridge games. Before this moment it had been exclusively off-limits to pledges.

In this privileged sanctuary the officers of the fraternity awaited me. They asked if I thought I deserved to be initiated into Phi Ep. I mumbled that I did indeed so think. They asked what I thought I could contribute to the fraternity. I mumbled some clichés about continuing its tra-

dition, augmenting its prestige on campus, and so on. Everyone in the small room then rose to shake my hand. There remained to instruct me in the Phi Ep handshake, in the use and meaning of the password, and finally to place the fraternity's pin on my shirt. Again there were handshakes all around. As I left the chapter room to return to the living room, I was met by applause and still more handshaking.

At lunch that day, after our entire class had been initiated, there was much singing and an air of high self-congratulation. The whole bizarre business had worked, another successful rite of passage had been brought off. Exhausted, I went to bed shortly after lunch, to sleep for seventeen straight hours. Before falling off I recall feeling confidently—more confidently than I shall probably ever feel again in my life—that I had arrived.

Postscript

AND yet—it is a very long story, to be told, perhaps, another time—sooner than I or anyone else would have dreamed, I was to depart, both from the University of Illinois and from Phi Ep, expelled from the one and disowned by the other. For more than a decade I would have nothing further to do with Phi Ep nor it with me. Then, on a visit to Champaign, I was suddenly overtaken by curiosity to see what had become of my old fraternity. I telephoned the University's Intra-fraternity Council to get the address of Phi Ep, for I had heard that the fraternity had moved out of its large white house on Third Street. A secretary gave me an address but the house to which she sent me was locked and quite empty. Phi Ep, it turned out, had ceased its formal existence the semester before. "It was a damn good house," a young man I met in the offices of the Intra-fraternity Council at the Student

Union said. "In their last year, just before folding, they won intramural sports on campus." Phi Sigma Delta, another of the Jewish fraternities, had also folded, not just on the Illinois campus but all over the country. A third Jewish fraternity, Tau Epsilon Pi (TEP) still existed, but had fallen on evil days. I remembered the TEP house as a grand and richly furnished place; now it was distinctly shabby. The piano was banged up, the furniture needed reupholstering, the whole place could have used a paint job. (I was later to learn that if the TEPs aren't able to muster a pledge class of at least twenty-five this coming fall, they, like the Phi Eps, are in danger of going under.)

When Phi Ep dissolved, a few of its members had joined other fraternities, and two of them were now in the TEP house. One came down to meet me. He was in chambray shirt and Levis, and had mutton chop sideburns connected to a thick black mustache. Nonetheless, he was still a fraternity man, for on meeting me he clasped my hand in what must certainly have been the Phi Ep handshake. He invited me up to his room where the other former Phi Ep was waiting.

Our conversation there was given over almost wholly to their unhappiness. The school, they said, was an enormous drag these days. All they seemed to do was study—or else sit around and talk about their future. As the talk continued, one of the things that emerged was their reverence for me because of the fact that I was a Phi Ep in the good old days when the fraternity was strong and being a member of it meant something. To my own eyes everybody on that campus seemed strikingly unhappy, but it's possible that as fraternity men they were even more so. For they were, quite simply and quite astonishingly to anyone who could remember back to what fraternity men had been only a few short years before, out of fashion, out of phase, and entirely out of joint.

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East Is West?

Kathleen Nott

THERE will soon be no earthly reason why travel should not be done on a simulator. And space travel, it appears, might quite possibly be better done by unmanned craft, until, paradoxically, when we have transported enough of the earth's environmental conditions, the package-tourist may become persuaded that the planets are worth a visit.

As things are, instant visual and auditory participation in the horrors of a war in Vietnam or a flood in Pakistan have gone a long way toward killing both imagination and sympathy, as well as the itch to go and see for oneself. Does anyone still believe that travel broadens the mind or improves our understanding of other races, either as individuals or as national groups? Do even statesmen believe that their incarnate apparitions—face-to-face—white, black, brown, or yellow—across a table—can do more to clarify an issue or evoke a response than a relayed and disembodied voice? They go because it is normal show business. They have to go somewhere else to be televised on location, and so feed a sham realism to an artificial public which is starving for the authentic.

For the rest of us, travel to comparatively distant parts is largely someone else's problem in logistics—how to get the largest number of people in the smallest compass and the shortest time from A to Z. The idea persists that at the end of fathoms, or rather leagues, there will be something rich and strange; but the next generation perhaps will discover it, if at all, more readily next door.

At the end of a month of being fired back and forth among six Asian countries I have less confidence than ever in "getting to know one another" and "meeting other writers" (or politicians or shopkeepers or farmers or brothel-keepers or any other trade), especially through professional gatherings which have just that purpose. And I feel that ideological frontiers of all kinds are no more to be breached by personal probes at any level than a softly receding arras.

Writers who are content or able just to write,

know this, and obviously the best travel writing, reportage or fiction, comes from sitting long enough in some exile to become assimilated—that is, from not traveling. However, writers do attend international gatherings, even ones very distant from their countries of origin, provided someone thinks it worthwhile to pay for them; and some of them are quite genuinely self-deceived about the benefits of making international contacts, both to the private individuals thus connected and to the atmosphere of opinion at home or at large. And even if they just go for the ride, herded together in the hard bird, they may genuinely believe that at the end an innocent eye, such as they must imagine themselves to possess—or why write?—will not be so bleary that it cannot see something significantly different which the world would sooner have in words than in photographs.

So one goes to the Far East from the comparatively Far West, still inwardly hopeful, sometimes half-convinced, that the differences one will actually be able to discern will be more striking and more meaningful and influential than the similarities.

HONG KONG, for British travelers, is a kind of lock between home and the East. Structurally it appears to consist of tall banks of slum apartment dwellings, in the morning extruding layers of bedding. At night the houses are strung with stagy illuminated signs in Chinese which give the effect of Christmas decorations across a main shopping street. It appears that the street lamps do not function but that Hong Kong relies on these sky-signs for street lighting. The English menus for Chinese eating read terribly—"Pig's lights and swan's toenails with fried water-beetle sauce" wouldn't be far off the mark. But the food is generally delicious to eat. The harbor is full both of spare gray cruisers, as evilly up to date as they can be, and square-built colorful junks that are just as efficient in their way and have probably looked just as tattered since they were first put to sea. On a fine warm day it is pleasant to cross to the mainland from Kowloon by ferry and take the funicular to the highest peak. The ferry and its gangway swarm with men and women, all small, neat, and pretty, the men nearly all in

KATHLEEN NOTT, a long-time contributor to these pages, is the well-known English writer. The trip to the Far East described in the present essay was taken by Miss Nott a year ago, in the summer of 1970.

spotless white shirts and thin tight black pants. This has a rather businesslike effect. So many people rushing to and fro between Kowloon and the mainland in efficient working garb suggests that they all have a lot to do in a hurry.

It may be that like other uniforms it levels poverty and affluence. In Japan, our next call, native dress is quite uncommon, much more than on my previous visit some ten years before. The Japanese have always been much cleverer at visually disguising their extremes. I remember being told that this had something to do with the refining fire which swept through the fragile slum buildings at fairly regular intervals. Thus, what with post-bombing devastation and rather low construction, not to challenge earthquakes unduly, Tokyo then seemed to be full of pleasant open spaces and the many gardens were more visible and usable. Now, through new techniques, they can build for height and permanence, so that Tokyo and Osaka are noisier than ever, pullulating with population, thriving and beastly. There is so much new construction going on, so many overpasses and underpasses extending themselves to infinity, that Tokyo looks like a derelict amusement park, which has just fallen to besieging hordes.

This is probably romantic nostalgia. Ten years before I had fallen in love with the old "Old Japan"—the temples and the Buddhas at Nara and Kyoto; the coolies in the rice paddies keeping off some of the soaking monsoon-rain with their colored umbrellas; the beautiful, traditional manners of all classes which, even if they were hypocritical, were so well-done that they seemed humane and sympathetic. This time again the warm thick rain fell quite steadily as if that bottomless gray reservoir the sky were able to mete out exactly its copious unpleasantness. But it fell on us, in the clangorous modern thoroughfare, and that's somehow different. Still, I don't have to like the new Japan, megalopolitan and probably breeding a new megalomania, its noise, its hustle, its bullying rudeness, and its Expo-ism. It's too like the West. Japan, on this snapshot visit, was at least interesting as a comment on the terribly rapid turnover of a modern traveler's nostalgia.

OUR NEXT assignment was Taiwan, the Nationalist Republic of China, which still deserves to be called Formosa, the Beautiful. On the western side it is lush and sloppy green with rice paddies. It is claimed that 87 per cent of this is now farmed by owner-tillers. The eastern half is mountainous, often volcanic terrain of next to no agricultural use. That makes it quite an achievement if, as is claimed, the country is self-supporting in staple food (rice) and since 1966 has even been exporting some agricultural products and textiles.

Marble, one of Taiwan's few natural resources,

is also a major tourist attraction. And you can drive to Taroka, the "Marble Gorge," which is at the eastern end of the cross-island highway; the highway runs along the edge of precipices above the Pacific and, tunnelling through great mountains, is quite an engineering feat. We, however, flew to see this spectacular in granite and marble, through the usual ten-tenths turgid cloud (in a nice, old-fashioned, two-engine plane; Chinese pilots are marvelous).

The "Gorge" is literally "marble halls," down and down to a granite floor. When you stand on the little railed balconies which have been built, bulging out from the tunnelling road, for the purpose of viewing, the top is invisible. If you throw up little bits of paper, they will dip and hover and soar far above the swallow-holes and the caves, and the swallows which fly at eye-level far below the towering walls. Down below there are turbulent torrents gray with trituration. Here and there on the little dry floors or beaches between the torrents and among the laminated bases of the great organ-pipe rocks, the pebbles had been formed into Chinese characters. The American Sinologist Edward Seidensticker (whom the Chinese call Mr. Sticker) confirmed that these were the equivalent of "Johnny loves Janie," to be seen on Western walls and pavements.

The natural terrain, violent by British standards which, as Aldous Huxley pointed out, remain Wordsworthian, is not irrelevant. All the territories we visited are potential disaster areas, and all these islands are built on jelly. Taiwan had two quakes in the week we were there. This, it seems, is average, and they are practically always slight, unlike those which Japan and Manila can experience. It may be fruitless to speculate whether a natural homeland given to unpredictable tantrums helps to resign its inhabitants to victimization by human forces or in part accounts for political fatalism. But commercially and touristically, all these countries know they have to play down their earthquakes, floods, and typhoons.

It might be that the tourist is actually safer nowadays in the new high-rises, designed, one assumes, to give with the shock. But you feel much more uncomfortable than during the London blitz. Rocked in the cradle of the deepest impulses of earth you return to helpless infancy. And it may teach you something about Western illusions about security. When you look out on the shellbacked hovels of the poor, you remember that he who is down need fear no fall.

The quake in Taipei awakened me from a dream of spying in which, though terrified, I was enjoying a sense of perfect mastery. The lamps had switched themselves on and were swinging. When I looked outside, I found that a vast slow storm, which sometimes stamped an enraged foot on a huge cracker, was going on. Mostly it was a

thick gray soup which, unending and infinitely slowly, moved across the space of heavens, heaving and flashing once an hour. The dream, the quake, and the storm, as one looks back, all blend into one ecology; human and natural, of unpredictable violence.

Whether the Chinese mainland intends to "liberate" Formosa or whether Chiang still intends to "liberate" the mainland, the native Formosans weren't, and aren't, being consulted one way or the other.

Theoretically, all the leaders not only of these politically emergent volcanic islands in the South China seas, but of the Korean peninsula, know they have two long and wandering frontiers—the one to be held against international Communism, the other against their own have-nots. That means that they have to make national democracy, according to their own idea of it, look as if it will pay—one day, if not tomorrow. Like all nations at war, they talk a good deal about democracy, much more about democracy than about freedom, and they do not really equate them. Freedom is for the nation rather than for the individual. There are opposition parties, but that does not necessarily mean that anti-governmental views are adequately represented. In Korea, for one example, parliament meets for only one hundred days annually—and many of these are occupied in free-for-alls which must express dissatisfaction with "democratic" means, it is true, but which also hold up democratic business. In all of the countries there are security restrictions, including censorship of newspapers and private correspondence.

Of all the leaders, Chiang is probably in the most equivocal position. The others are at home, but obviously Chiang wouldn't be ruling Formosa if the U.S. fleet hadn't occupied the Formosa Strait in 1958. And, as with the Philippines and Korea, economic growth, necessary to make free nationhood pay, depends to a great extent on foreign investment. There is a movement, both political and economic, toward "Asia for the Asians"—in inevitable practice, toward the economic hegemony of the old oppressor Japan or, so it appears, out of the frying pan into the fire. Free nationhood therefore looks somewhat chimerical.

Some of these reflections have trickled through (in triple interpretation) from the Generalissimo himself who received us in the Presidential palace, a curly pagoda building of imperial type, way up in misty mountains which are lush and green. Its view is marred by some unpleasant factory-type structures which turned out to be the administrative offices. A hot geyser comes somewhat incongruously out of this businesslike scene—maybe it supplies the palace with inconstant hot water.

Chiang is now a Chinese sage, a bald, old, silky parchment grin with a little beard and a digni-

field gown. Madam is black-haired as ever (this seems to be a gift of nature, not of cosmetics, to many mature Oriental women) and looks about thirty-five, or ageless. They are referred to as the First Couple; this is now a semi-official title. I said earlier "in triple interpretation" because it must all have been formulated first, and probably on some standard occasion, before being turned from Chinese into English, and finally passed through my part-prejudiced, part-skeptical understanding.

I am not casting aspersions on the Generalissimo's personal integrity, I mean that it is irrelevant. I mean that international meetings, individual and public—and this goes for writers' congresses too—tend to be ritual performances. No doubt there are some international gatherings, scientific, occasionally political, which advance their common themes and purposes, and their common interests, though even here, we are told, the serious business is done over the drinks. But writers, internationally, are not a strictly professional body, they have no one common theme or purpose and, unlike scientists or technicians or other trade unions, they haven't a socially vital product which they can withhold. And even if they had, even if anyone cared, a moratorium on words is the last thing you'd get a closed shop on. Writers tend to be in the Hobbesian state of nature—internecine. That doesn't mean they won't make use of one another if they can. Congresses, if practical at all, are more like the market than the forum, and the further afield they spread the more their delegates are concerned with selling their own national products. This is reflected in their themes which are commonly slightly different ways of filling in a general form—"The writer as . . ."—pushed about in relation to one or another aspect of society. Nevertheless, the literary discussions seldom take place at this ground level, they are usually very highminded—right up in the Ivory Tower.

What about freedom? Isn't freedom of expression the necessary tool of the writer's trade? Don't writers discuss? Don't they vociferate? Don't they try to turn all the Iron Curtains which bar them from their suffering fellow writers into a Wailing Wall? Not generally in the literary sessions per se. Yet this is surely where the real problem of all writers, how to write freely, should be heard. In the business sessions delegates from either side of the ideological frontier get up and say a set piece. It is all like a Medieval Disputation, without the summing-up and conclusion.

THE Taipei Conference, which I visited as an observer, had the portmanteau title, "Problems Facing the Asian Writer," and was thus no exception. In the literary sessions, freedom, the writer's tool, seemed to be no problem. Various small national liter-

atures tried to sell themselves—for instance, in the poetry session, though the chairman protested, prepared papers sang the preferential claims of national poetic arts. The reason for all this is not difficult to detect. Writers and writers' centers, for the most part, are committed verbally to freedom of expression, and in the new nations they often, with sincere idealism, seek some universal definition of freedom that could be applied in practice. But just because there are these new emergent centers, the congresses expand nearer and nearer to the cold-war line. The national governments, on the one hand, are by no means committed to any universal, or anything but a nationalist definition of freedom; on the other, they will put up money for the congresses, aided by their businessmen.

Dining and wining are a natural framework of congresses. For the uneasy liberal conscience, especially one aware that it has come at least in part for the ride, they provide another problem. Oriental hospitality is notoriously lavish and munificent. Hence when they casually present you with an expensive piece of jewelry you must distinguish the act both from any suggestion that you are thought worth buying, and from the general habit of bribery and corruption with which they live far more gracefully than we post-Reformation hypocrites.

In the East, too, the climate and the languages add special problems. Both make it difficult to get around on your own and see for yourself. In the dingy Turkish-bath heat and the swarming streets of Taipei and later Seoul, I used my two feet as much as possible. The inhabitants, while jostling, or charging full out with heavy bicycles along the sidewalks, were always polite, and looked less surprised than incredulous. They have little reason to suppose that Americans or Europeans have feet, for they hardly ever see them except inside air-conditioned cars.

Considering their horrible weather conditions, these Eastern airlines, internal and foreign, are extremely good, public relations less so. Between Osaka and Tokyo, having left for Seoul in the usual three-dimensional thunderstorm, we were told that a crash had closed the Tokyo runways. Later, on a Malaysian flight to Manila, through the fuming tempest, a voice, brightly soothing like a nurse's in a terminal case, assured us that there was no cause for alarm, MAL had the very latest in planes (Boeing 707) and we were in constant radio contact with the airport.

As we flew on to Seoul, the cloud opened briefly and the brown and green patchy map of Korea could be seen. From the tallest of several tall hotels built in the center of Seoul you can see out over a mass of curly roofs so low that they appear to have flattened the houses beneath them, and over the everlasting ruin of new building, as far as a circular backdrop of volcanoes, large, conical, and misty.

The first lot of press and cameramen at the airport set the style for many later exchanges. Their English has not been well taught, so that questions are framed less by informational requirements than by linguistic scope, and invite minimal replies. Example: "You are very famous, Miss Nott?" Answer: "Yes."

With the Koreans, like the Japanese, giggling is a reflex, so that you cannot tell if they have distinguished between leg-pulling and seriousness: Example: "Which are the good novelists in England, Miss Nott?" Answer: "None." But on reflection: "Me." All industriously and indiscriminately scribbled down.

It may have been something more than a language-block which accounted for two bits of misreporting: Question: "Are you very much troubled about Red infiltration from North Korea, Miss Nott?" Answer: "No, but much concerned that it is the only subject for conversation." My answer appeared next day—"Miss Nott said she was very much troubled about Red infiltration into South Korea." The official school curriculum in South Korea includes "moral education, special activities, and anti-Communism." Rather like Wonderland's "reeling and fainting coils."

BEFORE we arrived there had been some signs of illiberalism. A poet had been disciplined and jailed for a satirical poem which reflected on the government. Also some South Korean intellectuals had been spirited away from West to East Germany and so (in a roundabout way) home. Before the Congress, a Western representative inspected, and reported, *No writers in jail*. This struck some of us as a quick lick round before rich Auntie arrived. I have implied that the literary themes often seem odd or irrelevant. The Korean theme—"Humor as a Means of International Understanding"—could have seemed evasive.

Both John Updike and I referred to *Candide* and the way the jokes were aimed at Pangloss and the complacency which smooths over the real horrors and oppression of "the best of all possible worlds." I added that humor was often an offensive weapon and more often than not subversive in intention. This came out as: "Miss Nott said that humor was an excellent means of international understanding." I may remark that a typescript was provided.

They censor your letters. Odd for a Congress naturally devoted to freedom of expression and communication, which they so greatly welcomed. Hardly anyone I talked to received a letter during the whole fortnight.

We met many of the ministers including the President, Chung Hee Park and his Prime Minister. They are quiet, self-contained men with bronze masks. Park led the military *junta* which took over in 1961 and professed its intention of handing control back to the civilians as soon as

possible. They are already all in mufti. Park believes in democracy, at least as an end-product. He struck me as sincere, not least in the sense that he sincerely believes he is the best man for the job and that the constitutional rule which would have limited him to two terms will be rightly waived to allow him a third. And of course there is justice as well as honesty in his public statements that the Western democracies enjoyed an industrial development which paid for their liberalism. However, to some this looks like an elliptical definition of democracy.

Park is something of a philosopher-statesman. The country's future, he proclaims, depends greatly on the moral regeneration of the individual Korean. It is not certain which individuals he is referring to. He harps constantly on the corruption of the two previous regimes from which he took over. The individual, it seems, must not only take mature responsibility for himself, he must help to weed out corruption. But one can hardly doubt that some individuals are more corrupt than others because they have more opportunities for being so; and it is widely believed that some of these are still to be found in Park's own government.

Koreans, according to Park, come hard to maturity, especially political maturity. The student revolution of April 1960 was well-intentioned but the students made a mess of it. Park often suggests that they should realize that politics are really for their elders and betters, so we have to guess by what route they should arrive at maturity. Like others elsewhere, the President complains that the young generation is exceptionally lawless.

I believe that he is personally austere, and dedicated to his job and the endless hard work it involves. But these are the characteristics of successful leadership whether democratic or despotic. As usual along the anti-Communist front line, it is difficult to see how he could pay his way to liberal democracy unaided. The South Korean economy is booming, largely on foreign capital, at present mostly American, whose investment is profitable because of what the comfortable official jargon describes as the "low wage structure," and a certain privileged position in labor disputes.

THE visible frontier between poverty and wealth is sharper in Korea than anything I have seen. Seoul is admittedly about as big as Paris. Still, you wonder why, floods and roadblocks discounted, it always takes the best part of an hour to get to a private luncheon or dinner party. The answer is that the luxury hotels are up to their ankles in the mud and muddle of slums and slum clearance. You drive through a vast agglomeration of these pagoda-hovels—two compartments for living and sleeping for a whole family, with candles and water tanks. Eventually after some very adequate

by-passes on the outskirts, your large comfortable car, with a short almost vertical take-off, comes to rest—one might almost say to roost—by one among a number of the peaceful, beautiful, civilized abodes and gardens of the affluent and the tycoons.

In Seoul there are five million people "surly with traffic," as Ezra Pound put it. On most occasions police escorts got us through, riding motorcycles with flashing red lights at about 60 miles per hour—"no hands," because they were using these members to scatter the populace right and left. In ordinary civil disorder, they were less conspicuous. Once when the skies suddenly fell, we were trapped for about four hours with about two thousand others in the biggest traffic jam in the world. Yellow flood water rose to two or three feet and spurted out of the drains. The only moving cars drove on the sidewalks. The few pedestrians hid in lengths of enormous drainpipe about to be laid, no doubt for similar emergencies. Perhaps the police themselves were also trapped, or hiding in the pipes.

When looking out of my window one midnight, I was struck by the prolonged, inexplicable silence that had fallen suddenly. Nothing stirred. It turned out that this was the curfew. Out at dinner a few nights later, as it got toward twelve, I said it was time we were moving. Our host, who owns much of Korean industry and lives in a magnificent house set in a landscaped garden with lovely floodlit waterfalls, said: "I am above the law." However, we thought he might be below it, and made him drive us home.

Outside the city communications are good, with efficient highways and fast trains. Rice paddies, mud with bundles of sharp green, dominate the land. The after-image of these soaking plains is of a large white sheep up to its flanks in the mud. This turns out to be a human being, often a woman in native dress, apparently arrested forever in a bending posture over his/her labor. Irrigation, we are told, is proceeding rapidly, though I didn't actually spot any.

The South Korean economy suffered badly from the split, as most of the technical resources were in the North. But led by Park, the South Koreans are fond of comparing their "technological miracle" with that achieved by the West Germans after the war. Reunification, which dominates Park's thoughts if not his immediate plans, is perhaps more now a matter of symbolism and security than economics.

There are obvious resemblances to the Berlin Wall. At Panmunjom, we hung our noses into North Korea. It is a lovely and almost gracious part of the country, a great, rich undulating green in a ring of black shadow-hills where little neat pillared buildings look like temples and are in fact guardhouses. When it was pointed out, you could see a wavy line of yellow markers which was the center of no-man's-land. From the

little temples, we were inspected by the North Koreans through their binoculars. I expect that these calls by visiting parties, remote and sad though they are, bring some diversion into extremely dull lives. The temptation to pick somebody off some time must be almost irresistible. There is no doubt that the UN troops on the southern side, some of whom have another year of duty, are bored to anguish.

The best view is from the top of Freedom House which is reached by means of a long iron structure, called Freedom Bridge, over a big river. Before crossing we were lectured by a young officer on the history of the war and also on the wickedness of the regime that confronted us. We signed a document indemnifying the UN forces in case we were blown up, but we were momentarily encouraged by a note that read, "The road you are about to cross has never been known to be mined." It looked to me as if it had been blown up only the day before.

Within Freedom House, a rather jaunty structure with a gaily-colored pagoda tower, there was a committee room with a long table placed exactly along the dividing line between North and South. It is now hardly used, not anyway by the Armistice Commission. But it is kept in beautiful condition and the table has a long line of national flags, also along the armistice line. One reason why they can't make use of the room is that the North Koreans started the habit of bringing along a flag which was just a little taller than that of the United Nations, who must have retaliated; no doubt this not only palled but threatened to become unmanageable.

It is a source of pride, according to the newspapers, that President Park has played an important role in recent conferences of the Southeast Asian nations and in support of their pro-South Vietnam front. In Manila, the Philippine newspapers too were particularly pleased with President Marcos's leading role. Both Presidents would like to establish an Asiatic hegemony, though the wish is unrealistic because if they could relinquish American aid they would then have to rely on Japan. President Park's "leading role" has led to a "normalization" treaty with the Japanese, the age-long oppressors of his country, which is quite unpopular, especially with the rebellious students whom, as I noted earlier, President Park does not like.

PRESIDENT MARCOS of the Philippines has many similar problems. His country, however, is not geographically divided. On the other hand, the cold-war frontier meanders through it. The opposition Huks combine professional banditry with Communist guerrilla activity. This mountainous, volcanic land is thick with woods and bandits. I caused some inexplicable embarrassment by refusing a helicopter lift, kindly offered by Madam Marcos, to a private

swimming beach about a hundred miles from Manila, and traveling by private minibus instead, so I could see the country. Habitations seemed to be sparse along this main coast road. Dusk and woodland thickened at the end of the journey and from the hilly ground there were practically no lights to be seen. The *barrios* when you come to them have an extempore appearance, accidental collections of shacks with a candlelit illumination. That low candlepower may account for the deserted look of the after-dark landscape. Swarms of children scatter in the car's headlights.

I found I had been provided not only with a driver but with a man with a gun. They were awfully tactful and merely drove me mad by having the radio on full blast the whole time. This, they confessed, when they revealed the next day that I had been a dangerous nuisance, had been to keep up their own spirits. They had every minute expected a hold-up. In ordinary decency I returned by helicopter.

In the morning the guards lounging about on the chaises longues on the verandah where they had sat up all night to watch over us, told me that everyone hates the Americans but everyone loves President Marcos who means, like President Park, to stay in the leadership of his wild, steamy, stormy land, convinced no doubt of the importance of continuity when democracy is inevitably unstable.

Ferdinand E. Marcos, a more glamorous figure than President Park, was a noted guerrilla fighter and leader in World War II, during which he was severely tortured by the Japanese, and multi-decorated for his exploits at Bataan which, according to General MacArthur, helped to turn the tide against Japan. Among many talents he is perfectly trilingual, a brilliant lawyer, and a crack shot. All three, particularly the last, have had something to do with his status as a folk hero, which originated in his youth when he was framed for the assassination of the family's leading political rival—there was practically no one else who under the circumstances could have scored that particular bull. However the future President, still a law student, was able to argue his way out of the death-sentence in a speech which has become a classic of Philippine law, and to make hay of the suborned witnesses in English, Spanish, and Ilocano. But his family lost its entire fortune in his defense. Since then, to the press, he has always been "Number One." "Number Two," more likely "Number One A," is his handsome, attractive, stylish, and shrewd "First Lady," Imelda Marcos. She is immensely publicity-conscious and certainly her husband's best political asset. President Nixon, received not long before we were, said, in toasting the First Lady, that in an election he'd sooner have her on his side. Indefatigably she tours the *barrio*-hustings and sings to the people as well as haranguing them.

Like President Park, Marcos is committed to the two fronts, against Communism and against poverty. Economically they both started not just from nil but from a severely minus position, devastated both by war and by Japanese oppression, age-old in the case of the Koreans, but traumatic enough in either. Moreover, both have yet to achieve self-sufficiency in food which means, among other things, reform of a near feudal system of land tenure. Marcos has a scheme of government aid and self-help to farmers which meets with fanatical resistance from landowners who inherit another tradition of oppression from the Spanish religious occupation of the 16th century.

One of the most deeply-rooted traditions both countries share is corruption. Marcos is said to have a strong interest in legal reform. His own early experiences have no doubt convinced him that a really credible and visible justice is the essential foundation of a liberal democracy. Not surprisingly, Marcos shares Park's strongly moralizing attitude and tone, lashing his fellow countrymen for venality and lack of public spirit. One cannot know how much good this does—corruption may have been affected by all the other causes which make men natural outlaws, but it is also part of Oriental culture. People feel they have a natural right to be rewarded not only for doing their duty, but for refraining from crime.

The professed goal of both Presidents is a liberal democracy, and there seems no doubt that they believe that their ethical exhortations will help to achieve it and perhaps as well their other common goals of independent nationhood and a respected voice among the nations. Is any of this realistic? Or if illusory, is it also willful self-deception?

These are general questions which an old-

fashioned liberal has to ask. These two small nations might give him an answer about the future viability of liberalism which would also be retrospective; they might give him an idea whether liberalism was ever anything more than a phase, a historical accident.

Marcos believes he can provide a bridge between East and West. Certainly, for good or bad, the Philippines has been more influenced by the West than Korea. At the beginning of the century, American missionaries of self-help (the Thomasite movement) laid the foundations of the superior literacy and education on which many Filipinos pride themselves. All their Presidents so far have been nurtured in this tradition. Though careful to asseverate his anti-Communism, Marcos has already felt himself strong enough to envisage some sort of co-existence with mainland China and with the USSR.

WE LEFT Manila after a small quake and in one of those slow, stamping storms which make one dirty gray flashing tide of sea and sky. The last call was at Ceylon where because of Mrs. Bandaranaike's move to align with North Korea, mainland China, *et al.* the liberal literary elements had already begun to disperse for what must be a rapidly diminishing number of niches.

But both Colombo and Kandy looked—at least when we were there a year ago—as they must have looked for the last hundred and fifty years. And at the end of a long journey, it gave one a beautiful, nostalgic, reactionary feeling to live, if only for a few days, beside the Indian Ocean and to be able to consign politics and economics to tropical blazes.

A Modern Master

Norman Birnbaum

WHAT characterizes masters of social thought? Surely it is not alone, or even primarily, the quality of justness in their perceptions, the capacity to be right. It is not, again, the extent of their influence: charlatans, if only in the short-run, are sometimes more influential than their masterly contemporaries. Masterfulness has something to do with the resolution of the problem of flux, with the apprehension of perennial elements in historically specific moments. Put in another way, we may say that masters of social thought do more than depict the world: they create one, in the form of an imaginative construction more stark, more vivid, than the reality we experience in fragments or in uncertain and obscure illumination. There is, then, an irreducible element of artistry in social thinking—a resemblance to the process of thought in the natural sciences that is not quite appreciated by the positivist party in social science.

Two recent works by George Lichtheim exemplify these qualities.* One deals with the history of socialism, the other with a considerable figure in 20th-century socialist thought, the Hungarian philosopher George Lukács, who died last month at the age of eighty-six. The book on socialism is exceedingly dense, the work on Lukács too compressed. It is some-

what difficult to know what was intended by the title, *A Short History of Socialism*, but in this study Lichtheim touches upon—and integrates—more themes in under four hundred pages than most competent scholars in twice that number. The work on Lukács falls within a new series on "Modern Masters"—presumably as the general editor's tribute (Lichtheim himself is not enthusiastic about Lukács) to the late Hungarian's role as the most prominent philosopher within the orthodox Communist movement—though Lichtheim's treatment of Lukács can also be viewed as an extended subchapter of the larger study. Both works do continue, rather organically, the series of studies on modern society and Marxist thought which have already made Lichtheim's reputation: *Marxism: A Historical and Critical Study*; *Marxism in Modern France*; *The Concept of Ideology*; *The Origins of Socialism*; *The New Europe and Imperialism*.†

A Short History treats the socialist movement as the medium in which were refracted the larger conflicts of modern society and culture. A superficial interpretation might hold that Lichtheim emphasizes doctrine, or rather that he favors discussion of doctrine to portrayals of men and events. But Lichtheim is careful to set doctrine in its contexts. Doctrine, or socialist theory, provided the separate socialist groups with maps of reality and criteria of choice among political alternatives. Doctrine was, itself, a precipitate of the larger processes with which these groups had to contend. Men

do not make history only in full consciousness of it; they also seek to impose their own, even defective, visions upon history. Lichtheim's book is not least an exciting treatment of the role of ideas in history (and not socialist ideas alone, since liberalism, the varieties of modern irrationalism, and the democratic idea all come before us). The ideas, however, are very much in and part of history. Summary, or recapitulation, is out of place here; it would untie conceptual knots the reader must attack himself if he wishes to profit from the book, so I will just cite some of the major themes, to convey something of the argument.

Nowhere else in his writing—not even in his major study of Marxism—is Lichtheim so clear on the historical specificity of Marxism: it was a Western European response to the cataclysmic emergence of industrial society. It dealt, further, only with industrial society in its bourgeois form, in which the market was the essential social relationship. The critical Marxist concept, on this reading, remains the concept of exploitation; the critical prediction, the self-destruction of the society through the exploding of the contradiction between its productive capacity and its failure to satisfy human needs. The contradiction was not simply moral—although Lichtheim insists, again, that Marx's early moral philosophy is sublimated but still present in his economic theory—it was inherent in the developmental mechanisms of the market itself, and rested to a large extent on the specific notion of the extraction of surplus value by property owners from the

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* *A Short History of Socialism*, Praeger, 362 pp., \$3.95; *George Lukács*, Viking (Modern Masters series, edited by Frank Kermode), 146 pp., \$5.75 (\$1.85 in paperback).

† Readers of COMMENTARY will be familiar with this last study which originally appeared in these pages in April and May 1970.

propertyless. Lichtheim is especially challenging in his assertion that the attempt to found a socialism on other bases of economic analysis (as with the Fabians) foundered because of a lack of conceptual and, eventually, political direction. In some of the most suggestive passages in the work, Lichtheim examines the inadequacy of Marxism to deal with contemporary market, property, and political structures which call for new concepts, not now entirely visible on the intellectual horizon.

The development of socialism, then, is for Lichtheim inextricably bound to the fate—theoretic and practical—of Marxism. His conception of Marxism, however, has another dimension—that of political democracy. We sometimes forget that Marx himself became a reformist, of sorts, at the end of his life—if we take the term to mean not someone content with a modification of capitalism, but someone who thought that socialism could be attained by electoral means. This, too, had a precondition: the presence of an effective democratic system of representation. Lichtheim is eloquent on the way in which German Social Democracy was the bulwark of democracy in a society whose elites (and middle class) were never converted to the ideals of the French Revolution. He later hints that new movements in our own society (including the student revolt, of which he has not been a prominent supporter) may be seen as historical evidence of new forms of conflict. These involve not struggles between the propertied and the propertyless, but between subjects and technocrats. Marx hoped for, and expected, a democratization of society, a community of equals, as a consequence of the socialist revolution. Since then the political basis for that revolution, the organized working class, has diminished in political importance relative to newer strata: the technical intelligentsia and the technocracy which commands it. Revolts (or, the French 1968 convulsion aside, murmurings) among the technical intelligentsia suggest that the demand for a democratization of society may now emerge under

conditions of social struggle not envisaged by Marx. We may—and Lichtheim is sympathetic to the attempt, while somewhat skeptical of it—term the technical intelligentsia a new part of the working class. There is, as he points out, some evidence that Marx glimpsed the future role of intellectual labor in advanced industrial systems. The socialist legacy in politics, however, leaves us little by way of guidelines through this, our new maze. The concentration and socialization of the means of production and administration, indeed, provide the basis for new forms of exploitation and domination—at the hands of the technocracy as an unexpected historical successor to the propertied bourgeoisie.

On one point, Lichtheim is clear. The younger European radicals (and some, now, in the United States) have recently begun a reassessment of the anarchist tradition. They hope, evidently, to find new possibilities for participation in economic and political processes, new modes of direct political action. The ossification of the social democratic parties and the bureaucratic terrorism of the state socialist regimes have moved them to reevaluate the socialist tradition as a whole. For Lichtheim anarchism is a backward creed—backward in that it originated in pre-industrial societies, in that it refuses to confront the issue of the struggle for control of the state, and backward (if not worse) in its enforced reliance upon means which largely preclude the activation of popular revolutionary consciousness in industrial conditions. Briefly, in the struggle between Marx and Bakunin, Lichtheim's sympathies go entirely to Marx. But can Bakunin be dismissed simply as a fanatic Russian nobleman, lost in a world he dreamed he could remake? Is there not something in anarchism missed by the central socialist tradition, with its Jacobin emphasis on the seizure of the state and the education of the nation? Lichtheim shows more sympathy for the anarcho-syndicalist tradition in France, which indeed reemerged in tentative and fragmented form during the 1968 revolt. Perhaps this line

of descent in socialism is of more contemporary relevance than many of us had thought.

The vicissitudes of the Jacobin tradition, incorporated in socialism, constitute another of Lichtheim's themes. Foreign, where not incomprehensible, to those in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Jacobinism for Europe has been a tradition of both political conflict and political renewal. Of course a doctrine can be held responsible for too much (did not Jean Lacouture term Charles de Gaulle a "Jacobin cardinal," referring to his religious devotion to state and nation?). Lichtheim is persuasive, however, on the way in which the Jacobin model of revolution haunted and influenced 19th-century socialists. His account of the transplanting of the tradition to Russia, and its merger there with elements drawn from populism and Marxism, is a study in the irreducible specificity of history. Lenin held that he worked according to "scientific" laws; in fact, he had intuitively grasped the revolutionary potential of the Russian peasantry—and appropriated this, in turn, to ends not within the Marxist tradition, namely, the forced-draft industrialization of a backward country. Lichtheim's dismay at the vulgarities of a certain version of Maoism does at times lead him to underestimate the continuities between Leninism and Maoism. If Mao has posed the problem of imperialism in a somewhat crude fashion, the problem remains unsolved within the Marxist tradition.

LICHTHEIM is at his best in the analysis of the origins and functioning of totalitarianism. He uses a reasonably rigorous definition: totalitarianism is the seizure of the state apparatus for the purpose of remaking society from above. He is able to show the structural similarities between Stalinist and Nazi techniques of rule, despite the obvious differences in their starting points and social bases. Indeed, the totalitarian phenomenon is for Lichtheim a case of what he would term the autonomy or rather the specificity of politics. One of the defects of a certain form of socialist thought

was the conviction that, a broad socio-historical theory of society having been developed, the rest would follow. Marx's theory, however, inserted socio-economic structure within national historical settings: Marx was aware of the difference between his general statements of historical tendency and the concrete conditions in which these worked themselves out. Lichtheim, himself a shocked onlooker (or younger participant) in what he elsewhere described as the European civil war, is aware that fascism was not merely monopoly capitalism's successful manipulation of a supine populace. It drew upon deep reserves of irrationality, and the ideological adumbration of these, in the European middle class—especially in Germany. Perhaps the most telling passages of the book are these—but what do they have to do with socialism?

Rather a lot: socialism, as Lichtheim envisages it, is not alone a doctrine about politics and economics, and a political program (of a long-range kind) derived from this. It also entails a theory of human nature, derived directly from the optimism of the Enlightenment, and a conception of culture at once rational and Promethean. Lichtheim's abhorrence for Stalinism is very great, but it is not at all uncharacteristic that he should in these pages acknowledge that Gramsci, the founder of the Italian Communist party, may have been both the most original Marxist of our century and the one closest to the spirit of Marx's work. Gramsci saw that a "historical bloc," his term for an ascendant alliance of social elements, had to be culturally integrated as well as united on proximate political ends. Cultural creativity, in the sense of finding new forms for the expression of human value, is, then, a political factor of very great and indispensable weight.

As Lichtheim sees it, the defects of liberalism, socialism's great opponent, were three. It signally failed to grasp the inefficacy of the market mechanism, to put it in minimal terms, as a means of satisfying human wants. Its theory of politics, if noble in aim, was fatuous in effect: property was more

important than citizenship. Finally, its notion of human culture presupposed as realities the autonomous human powers socialism wished to educate and release—and presented these in the vulgar form of random wants. It is now less surprising that Lichtheim, himself so versed in history and politics, should have turned to Lukács as a philosopher. The question at issue is the nature of human nature and the possibilities of a new culture. These questions, as treated by Lukács (and, in turn, Lichtheim), are eminently political.

THE book on Lukács may be read in three ways: as an account of the tortured career of a member of the Central European intelligentsia during our century; as a study in the history of modern German thought and culture; and, finally, as a pained, even bitter, analysis of a philosophical Marxism too close to politics to be of political use. Let it be said at the outset: this is a very difficult book. Not many readers in the English-speaking world will have much knowledge of German thought, and the book almost presupposes some. However, a reader curious about Lukács, Germany, or Marxism will come away from the text with his views enlarged. He may even have his confidence in the empiricism and positivism of social thought shaken.

One philosophical assumption permeates the text. A major aspect of the modern cultural crisis lies in the disintegration of philosophy. Positivism and empiricism hold that only scientific method, of the sort privileged to the laboratory sciences, can give us knowledge. The rest may be aesthetic or moral discourse, treated rather like the 19th-century remark that Christianity was interesting, if true, but permitted no objective claim to integrate our perceptions, much less guide our actions. The profound reasons for the anchoring of this philosophy in the English-speaking world need not now concern us; the theme requires a book. (Lichtheim, indeed, is writing one which will attack the subject, in the form of a history of modern

culture and society.) Our own contemporaries in the English-speaking world are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with our heritage, and the young, for want of a serious metaphysical alternative, are often victims of obscurantism and cretinism of the worst kind.

Lichtheim shows that this crisis did not spare Europe. At the beginning of the century, cultivated Europeans were desperately seeking a way out of the dilemmas posed by the rise of positivism—and the concomitant decline of metaphysics and religion. Lukács was himself tempted by an irrationalist tendency in German thought, but he was also drawn to Wilhelm Dilthey's effort to salvage an objective foundation for judgments about culture and history. This German philosopher held that culture analysis could intuit a world of human meaning—and insisted on an underlying unity of mankind. Lukács's journey from his youthful aestheticism to Marxism, then, had a number of way stations.

One of these was his encounter with the sociologist Max Weber. Weber himself held a paradoxical position. He made use of Dilthey's objective intuitionism to understand the ineluctably purposive component in action, but he held that sociology could proceed empirically, all the same, to establish general truths independent of all values. In politics, he came rather close to systematic irrationalism. The world was a chaos of competing value universes: a Hobbesian struggle prevailed among men, mediated by their ideas. Choice was possible, but only at the price of renouncing a reasoned basis for it. It is no wonder that Weber, torn in these ways, at one point went mad. The irrationalist aspects of his thought had fatal consequences for the rise of a fascist philosophy in Germany. The Weber taught to students in America is often denuded of these conflicts, and it is surprising to see Lichtheim treat him as one or another variety of empiricist. It was Weber who described his younger friends (Lukács among them) as drawn to socialism as a form of "intoxication." Alas, his sober

hopes for a more orderly politics than socialist revolution were as doomed to failure as theirs.

How did Lukács, a rich young Hungarian Jewish aesthete, come to Marxism? The Russian Revolution, coming as the agony of the European war seemed interminable, promised a path to salvation for some of the intellectuals. Action seemed the exclusive domain of the irrationalists. The Enlightenment's legacy was reduced to the philosophical search for a human essence, but this was essentially contemplative. The spectacle of a revolution which set as its goal not simply a change of regime but a change in the human condition seemed a lesson in philosophy become life itself. The promised appropriation of culture by peasants and workers seemed to meet the requirements not only of justice: it promised a higher social function, the ending of their isolation, to the intellectuals.

In the event, Lukács—once he had plunged into politics—almost immediately became prominent in the ultra-Left faction of Hungarian socialism. Lichtheim suggests that the general attraction of socialism for educated Hungarian Jewry (and, by extension, for Jews elsewhere in Central Europe) was heightened by the absence of a strong bourgeois-democratic tradition there. I once heard the late Franz Borkenau, to whom Lichtheim dedicates his book on Lukács, declare that Lukács had a Jewish sense of moral problems. This may be so, but the Jewish tradition is conspicuous by its absence in Lukács's works. What motivated his ultra-leftism may well have been a remnant of the cult of action in the irrationalist doctrines Lukács encountered before 1914 in Germany. By 1922, however, he had philosophically refined his Marxism. It was so refined that his *History and Class Consciousness*, the essay collection he published that year, represented a major contribution to modern Marxism.

The book has been much discussed, but not always understood in its context (French and Italian translations of the German original have been available for some

time, but the MIT Press has only recently published an English translation*) and perhaps Lichtheim's readers might have been better served with a straightforward exposition of its contents. His discussion alternates between exposition, interpretation, and extrapolation. He shows the book as derived, not from Marxist politics or Marxist thought alone, but from Lukács's struggles with the metaphysical tradition. The politics of *History and Class Consciousness* are relatively clear. These constitute a defense of the thesis that where the political development of the proletariat is insufficient, a revolutionary vanguard may act upon and for it. Looking back, we may see this as a variant of Leninist doctrine on the historic role of the party—but in that epoch the Leninists insisted that the party represented the proletariat in a direct sense. For Lukács to have explained that the proletariat need not be consulted was an embarrassingly frank avowal of Bolshevik practice—but one which many Communists had not yet permitted themselves. Lukács, an intellectual Communist leader who had experienced the reluctance of the Hungarian and German proletariats to embark upon a revolution, devised this doctrine to explain and justify his own politics. Such clarity, however, was unwelcome at the time to the less intellectual Communists.

The attacks on Lukács provoked by the book, which eventually led him to recant, had yet another cause. The most philosophical chapter, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," was a return to the Hegelian elements in Marxism. It was a return all the more remarkable for its consonance with the contents of those early Marxist manuscripts—first published in Germany in 1932—which contain a full exposition of the doctrines of "alienation." Of some of their early writing, Engels had said that he and Marx were at one point content to leave it to the "gnawing criticism of the mice." Lukács's argument was, at any rate, a total repu-

diation of Engels's "materialist" and "positivist" version of Marxism—and, therewith, a mortal philosophical danger for what passed in the Communist movement at the time as "orthodox" Marxism. Lukács treated revolutionary action as resolving a philosophical dilemma. Kant had held that morality could only tell us what ought to be, that moral judgments and empirical ones were totally distinct. The Neo-Kantians among the socialists were insistent on the moral claims of their doctrine, but could not relate it to any objective historical process. Engels's version of Marxism converted "materialism" into a metaphysical substratum for history—not less metaphysical than Hegel's world spirit, and a good deal more so than Marx's early concept of human activity. According to this version of "materialism," socialist thought was an empirical science of history and the task of the socialist movement was to follow history's mechanical determinism. Socialism's leaders, in other words, legitimated themselves by their possession of the knowledge of history's objective laws—they were, at the same time, scientists of history and technologists of revolution. Lenin followed this reasoning in depicting knowledge and perception as "reflections" of reality, with, of course, Communist theory as the true "reflection" of history's objective structure.

To this determinism, the moralizing socialists could only oppose the humanistic imperatives derived from Kant. Others, Lichtheim asserts, were driven from socialism to irrationalism by the depiction of humanity's highest aspirations as a mechanical consequence of a universe devoid of freedom. Lukács's originality consisted in cutting through the dilemma; he posed the problem in different terms. The proletariat had to be seen, he held, as an acting subject. In creating new historical conditions, it modified the objective course of events—in effect, it leaped from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. In doing so, it ended mankind's bondage to a "reified" world of its own making, in which human activity imprisoned its very authors.

* *History and Class Consciousness*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, 356 pp., \$8.95.

The realization of the objective possibilities for human development was the proletariat's task—but it had to assume it, and mechanical causation was excluded. Lichtheim depicts Lukács as striking a triple blow: at the Kantians, who were sure of right action but quite unsure that a moral world could be made by it; at the irrationalists, who held that men had to act intuitively, without any rational foundation either in motive or the structure of the historical world; at the "materialist" Marxists, who envisaged a mechanical triumph. Lichtheim insists that Lukács's notions drew heavily upon the legacy of German classical philosophy.

Indeed, Lichtheim is bitterly critical of Lukács's own repudiation of his philosophical and political daring. Had Lukács stuck to his position, Lichtheim holds, he might have contributed to the early development of a Western Marxism fully integrated with the Western philosophical tradition. This, in turn, might have won some of the Central European (and particularly German) educated class away from the irrationalism they finally succumbed to—with hideous consequences—in 1933. Lukács's orthodox Marxist contemporaries, at any rate, were far from allowing considerations of this sort to influence them. They strenuously objected to Lukács's return, as they saw it, to Hegelianism. It was true that Lukács had endorsed the notion of a vanguard. If the vanguard acted, however, not because it possessed the scientific key to objective historical laws, but in response to a metaphysical conception of human possibility, it could claim infallibility only with the greatest of difficulty. Lenin's epistemology was intolerably crude, but it had its uses. If men did not simply "reflect" objective processes in their minds, as Lenin held, but created their own historical world, the way was open for all kinds of participation and spontaneity in revolutionary politics. Moreover, it was precisely Lukács's effort to set Marxism in a line of descent from the central traditions of Western philosophy that enraged the philistines in the Communist

movement, who were already in the ascendancy. Those who today think that politics can do without philosophy might reflect on the instinctive reaction to a philosophical challenge on the part of men not conspicuous for restraining their political ruthlessness. The Communist movement correctly saw in Lukács's book a profound heresy.

LUKÁCS's later writings entailed a retreat from the position and the venturesomeness of *History and Class Consciousness*. Lichtheim is extremely critical of Lukács's successive adjustments to party orthodoxy, while acknowledging that a man who lived for many years under Stalinism in Moscow had little choice but to conform or disappear. Lichtheim's regret that Lukács had not stuck to his early path pays a serious tribute to the thinker. It also connects the larger book on socialism to the shorter one on Lukács, since the issues revolve around the assumptions and moral quality of a culture. Suppose Lukács had persisted in his effort to develop a Western Marxism; would he have made a considerable impact on a German *buergerium* more addicted to irrationalism? We do not know. We may observe that, at the moment, the democratic convictions of the students and intellectuals in the Federal Republic of Germany make of them Germany's first democratic generation since 1848. There is more than an accidental connection between this fact and the influence of the fully Westernized (and anti-authoritarian) Marxism of the Frankfurt School. In any event, Lukács's own later ventures in the explanation of German history and the rise of fascism strike Lichtheim as very inadequate. Lukács held that irrationalism was the ideology of a class unable to perceive, let alone solve, its problems—whereas rationalism is the philosophy of a rising class, about to master history. To this Lichtheim objects that the French and British bourgeoisie were no less bourgeois than their German counterparts, but distinctly more rational, and certainly not fascist. From the philosophical Marxism of *History*

and *Class Consciousness*, Lukács had descended to a more derivative and mechanical historicism. In contrast, Gramsci's notion of the cultural functions of a "historical bloc," its task of cultural renewal in a national tradition, seems much more refined and profound.

LICHTHEIM concludes his study with a treatment of Lukács's aesthetic doctrine, especially as set forth in his 1963 treatise, *The Specificity of Aesthetics*. For Lukács, the specificity of aesthetic experience was that it united intellect and feeling, subject and object, individual and universal. Aesthetics was a realm which "reflected" a higher human reality. If it constituted an anthropomorphic cosmos, it was because the essence of humanity—its past triumphs, present tasks, and future fulfillment—lay in the humanization of the world. It cannot be said that Lichtheim's summary renders Lukács's aesthetics crystal clear—but the original text is exceedingly difficult reading. In it, Lukács attempted to mark his distances both from a crude and literal "socialist realism" (and from a literal "realism" in general) and from what he disliked in modern art, its supposed subjectivism. In many of his polemical writings Lukács had rejected the conception of a "human condition" (with the accompanying implication that alienation might be a permanent feature of it, not to be overcome even in "socialist" societies). In his philosophy of aesthetics, however, he returned to an idea of a human essence—to an objective realm of spirit and value, realized, to date, only in art. Lichtheim is quite convincing when he argues that the search for a human essence underlies both Lukács's politics and his aesthetics. With this search, Lichtheim asserts, Lukács marks his continuity with classical German culture, and with the intuitionism of his youth. There is, certainly, something pervasively unmodern in Lukács's aesthetics. The formal inventiveness, spiritual jaggedness, and explosive amorality of modern art are parts of a sustained critique of modern culture—as a world in which men are not at home. For Lukács, the

ethical dimension in art is irreducible: it points, or ought to point, to a humane world. The notions of art as consolation, as sublimation, as play, are rather remote from the central elements in his thought. Perhaps this explains why the Communist movement's most renowned aesthete should have kept his distance throughout his life from doctrines of cultural revolution, from efforts to make art become life. The moralizing Marxist turns out to be a bourgeois under the skin. In any event, neither Lukács nor his critic

writes very concretely about specific works of art: the whole is a debate conducted in philosophical categories.

LIKE everything else Lichtheim has written, the work on socialism and the brief treatise on Lukács are united by a pervasive concern for the dignity of theory, theory not as pure contemplation, but as an image of man and the world which infuses action. The books are also distinguished by a deep sense of historical nuance, an understanding of the specificity of

national traditions and cultures. These in turn fuse with a considerable acuity in the description of general historical tendencies as distinct from concrete historical situations. Few born outside the English-speaking tradition know it so well; few within it write so lucidly of matters so complex. Lichtheim, in these pages, is both a theorist and a historian: he can depict a world, and seize its inner principles of movement. Lichtheim writes of Lukács as a modern master; when will we recognize that Lichtheim himself is one?

Theater

Ibsen's Nora and Ours

Jack Richardson

OCCASIONALLY life provides complementary moments of experience, making it seem as though existence were not after all simply a collection of random events upon which only an unsettled mind would think of imposing order. And when one such moment takes place in the theater and the other in the serious world of political ideology, it is, at least to me, doubly pleasing; for, like all drama critics, I have sometimes wondered if there is any real interplay between the art I spend so much time thinking about and the society I spend so much effort living in.

The events I am referring to took place during April of this year. The first was a performance I attended of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; the second was a meeting, to which I had been invited, of the Theatre for Ideas, an organization that, every so often, sends out a call for intellectuals to gather and discuss

the timely and timeless questions from which, for the most part, they earn their livings. Thus one night I could watch Nora set out from the Helmer household in search of experience that would allow her, as a woman, to form an identity independent of that which men had made for her, and then, hardly twenty-four hours later, I could witness the embodiment of the difficulties she must have encountered in doing so. For the subject of that particular meeting of the Theatre for Ideas was Women's Liberation, and one definitely felt the presence of Nora's ghost in the room as her present-day sisters insisted that not only should the doll's house be fled but that it should also be razed and the bric-a-brac contained therein indiscriminately smashed.

Before we proceed, however, to the Noras of our time, it is best first to look closely at Ibsen's heroine in her original setting. And here, it seems, the most important thing that one must say about her, although it may not be politic

to behave as a literary historian toward a conception that can still draw cheers from an audience a century or so after her debut, is that she was not unique. One need not be tendentious in one's reading of the literature of the 19th century to see that the abuse and misdirection of female energy concerned the best writers of the age. No one who had enough intelligence and perception to write a first-rate novel could have overlooked the discrepancies between what social custom decreed a woman should be and what, in fact, she was. Again and again male writers, who as political beings would never have tolerated John Stuart Mill's feminist proposals, had to report, as artists, that something indeed was very much amiss with half of their society's population. It was, after all, a Dickens character, Bella Wilfer, in *Our Mutual Friend*, who declared about her marriage, "I want to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll's house"; and it is apparent that

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David Copperfield, Dickens's masterpiece, is mainly concerned with the search by a reasonably sensitive man for a woman with whom he can live—for a woman, that is, who has a deeper being than that which a proper English gentleman had been taught to think admirable in his bride. Then, of course, there are Thackeray, Tolstoy, Flaubert, Balzac, Zola, James—but why name every novelist of the time? It is sufficient simply to recall, in general, all those baffled and baffling child brides, all those psychologically justified adulteries, all those flights from the middle-class parlor into desperate romance, to understand that there was then a deep awareness that women and community mores were often in disastrous conflict with each other.

Now Ibsen did three things with this theme that made his work unsettling even to his sophisticated contemporaries. First, of course, he presented it from a woman's point of view: Nora is the spokesman for her problem, not simply the effective cause of a husband's puzzlement or society's retribution. Second, there was no romance connected with Nora's decision to leave husband, home, and children. She did not abandon one man for another, or even one world for a more exciting one. In fact, she had no vision of an alternative life to sustain her, and her third-act exit is deduced calmly from the injustices and degradations she has experienced as a woman in her society. In short, her decision was, for Ibsen's time, disquietingly unfeminine and created a climate of intellectual argument rather than a feeling of sympathy for a woman's passions. Third, she does not suffer, at least within the confines of the play, any dire consequences for this act. No judgment, artistic or moral, is passed on her, and she walks out of our view into a future that may very well be rich and happy.

It must be said, however, that for all the firmness she suddenly demonstrates in the last twenty minutes of the play, Nora is really not a person acting mainly from a general conviction. To have made her renunciation of a domestic fate a symbol for all women, Ibsen would have had to present us with

a household much less biased in her favor. Had her husband, Tolvald, been something more than the pettiest of petit-bourgeois, had he been a man who loved his wife more than he did his position in society, had he, even while perpetuating a world of tarantellas and animal nicknames, stood by Nora when his authority as bank manager was threatened by the possible disclosure of her humane act of forgery—had he done these things, then, even though he did not grace Nora's intelligence with serious talks about their lives or cease to make her imitate a squirrel each time she wanted money, Nora's quarrel would have been clearly with society and not with a boorish intermediary. For her to earn the right to much of her farewell rhetoric, Tolvald would have to be a decent man, a man who honestly loves in the way society has trained him to. Nora's rejection of such a man would then become the deep denunciation of tribal custom that Ibsen intended.

Both Ibsen and Nora knew that this was a problem. For Nora to have left her husband simply because he treated her with an affection she found dehumanizing, would have made her seem monstrous even in her own eyes. When she knows that the fact of her forgery is about to be revealed and that Tolvald's love for her is going to be tested, she waits with mixed feelings for his reaction. It will be, as she says, a miracle she both dreads and hopes for, a miracle, that is, which will force upon her either a new, uncharted life or a resignation to her status as a husband's diversion. If Tolvald stands by her, she will have no handy impetus for her departure; she will have to accept the consequences of the "miracle" and pay honor to his love for her. If, as indeed he does, he proves himself to be an example of self-centered hysteria, then she will have the justification that she needs to turn her rebellious feelings into action. Thus she and Ibsen have it both ways: a heroic finale without the unpalatable disciplines and sacrifices that generally attend such highminded moments.

Now I am not here faulting Ibsen for having written one play

and not another. Indeed, the different loyalties that act upon Nora and make her treat the responsibility of being loved with ambivalence, create human subtleties that no amount of intellectual rigor could compensate for, at least in terms of effective drama. However, it is an important point to remember that in order to get Nora out of the door and into the beginnings of an emancipated life, Ibsen had to create a Tolvald, a typical 19th-century personification of sexual insensitivity and self-righteous ethics. Subtler reasons may have urged Nora on, but without Tolvald's lamentable personality, she could never have swept off the stage so dramatically sure of herself.

WELL now, a good amount of time has passed since Nora gave back her wedding ring, and we have all come to know something of what her future was like. We know of her battles to enter the political life of her society, to become part of its respected professions, to seek the knowledge contained in its universities, and to use that knowledge in ways that would be disinterestedly respected and recompensed. We have also watched her liberate whole areas of her being from constricting taboos and establish a sometimes tyrannical sovereignty over her body that often made it as much an item of politics as the minimum wage or public housing. In extreme moments, she has even dreamed of alternatives to nature itself, glimpsing a world in which men were not needed or desired, where the feminine spirit could create a new order of things, an order free of the old stultifying hierarchies, aggressions, fears, and philosophies that male-dominated history had created. And in more lucid moments, from the very depth of her intelligence, she lamented the lack of myths in her culture that offered her something other than a quietistic future, that allowed her the romance of active adventure rather than that of bedroom intrigues.

However, while Nora was expanding the vision of her self, she was also extending the memory of Tolvald, making him a universal symbol of maleness so that her cause would always have a villain

on hand to lend it the drama of direct confrontation that it had in the last act of her play. Tolvaldism, she maintained, lurked within the most enlightened men, and soon she seemed to be addressing herself to little else but the dour memory of Tolvald, as though she were haunted by the simplicity in the decision he had forced her to make and wanted to perpetuate its primitive environment.

Which brings us to Town Hall and "A Dialogue of Women's Liberation." The announced participants for the evening were Jacqueline Ceballos, Germaine Greer, Jill Johnston, Diana Trilling, and Norman Mailer; but it is understood at these meetings that there is always another participant on hand in addition to those announced on the program: namely, the intellectual community, many of whom are expressly invited to question and probe the speakers.

This, then, was the cast for the evening, and a practiced eye should have been able to tell immediately that, given such an assembly, one would be treated to theater, perhaps, but to very few ideas. First of all, it was a bad omen to see Mailer, in the capacity of moderator, as the lone male figure on stage. Not that he hasn't written with a certain brilliance about women and their present political movement; but his views on the subject are extremely personal and full of crotchets, making them useful only in terms of a literary sensibility in pursuit of apposite and memorable metaphors. A man, for example, who has taken a public stand against birth control, for whatever life-enhancing reasons, is in a fragile position at such a gathering. A man who, in print, has referred to his sexual member as the "retaliator" has hardly any position at all. Most men, after all, go through life with penises unburdened by such Homeric epithets, and it would have been better, in the spirit of frank dialogue, to have found a phallic neutralist to moderate the proceedings so that, from the very beginning, a great deal of glib hostility could have been done away with.

But the evening had been pointedly arranged for squabbling. Even the women on stage had been

especially chosen for the differences among them that might prove abrasive. There was the movement's liberal wing, for example, represented by Jacqueline Ceballos; Germaine Greer was present for the more radical tastes; Jill Johnston stood up for the lesbians' splinter party; and Diana Trilling maintained the conservative balance. With so much internecine warfare possible, it was unlikely that anything approaching a dialogue would result.

However, all might have been forgiven in the name of theatrical excitement, had the theatricality not smacked of last century's melodrama. For all the racy modernism that some of the speakers affected in their language and attitudes, one still had the feeling that they considered themselves saucy gadflies in a Victorian drawing room. Their arguments and social proposals were directed at imaginations bound as firmly by convention as Nora's abandoned husband's, and the details of their polemics produced propositions and images which only that benighted paterfamilias could have, in his untutored guilt, considered true, or, in his Nordic provincialism, found shocking.

I WILL begin an account of the evening with the one exception to the above judgment: Diana Trilling, referring to Mailer's *The Prisoner of Sex*,* tried valiantly to set up an area of discussion that would investigate the tension between the demands of the body and those of the spirit. Her thesis, that a realistic balance must be maintained between biology and political aspiration, while not startlingly original, nevertheless did have the advantage of dealing with reality. Also, it was good to hear her attack some of the more meretricious propaganda connected with Women's Lib—e.g., the denial of the existence of the vaginal orgasm—and chastise the movement for taking advantage of the sexual ignorance that, she rightly stated, was still too prevalent in our supposedly enlightened age. But Mrs. Trilling was, unfortunately, no match for the flashy showmanship

of her fellow panelists and the emotional fundamentalism of that part of the audience to which they catered. For example, Mrs. Trilling had stated that though she respected Freud, she did not venerate him and took from his works only what her own experience had taught her was correct. Later Germaine Greer, justifying some Freudian borrowings in her book, *The Female Eunuch*, to which Diana Trilling had made reference, stated that she, too, "took what was useful from Freud and left the rest." "I never said that," countered Mrs. Trilling, who then tried to make a distinction between appropriating what is politically useful and accepting that which seems intellectually valid. But she had no chance. Miss Greer's followers were already shouting their approval of their leader's turn of phrase and shallow honesty.

The evening's first speaker, Jacqueline Ceballos, more or less set the intellectual tone for what was to come. Bubbling with facts and visions everyone present must have heard a thousand times before, she began, in the manner of a country-club committee woman presenting an agenda for a *really different* costume party, to outline the world that would come with full female liberation. It would contain bright, ebullient young women, who had never played with dolls or accepted the virtues of passivity, going out to take their rightful place in the society's bureaucracy—having, of course, along the way, dropped off their sons and daughters at a child-care center. It would be a world of paid vacations for housewives, and salaries, not doles, for their smoothly maintaining the domestic rhythms of the home. It would be a world, in short, where precise calculation would be given to all activity and a price fixed accordingly.

Now even Tolvald was willing to give women responsible jobs at his bank, and I'm sure that he would have found Miss Ceballos's predictions not at all disquieting. After all, they more or less perpetuate a world he was very much at home in, a world of work and economic bickering that could easily be persuaded, in the names of profit and progress, to eradicate all sexual

* Little, Brown, 240 pp., \$5.95.

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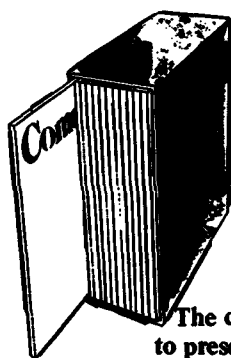
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distinctions. Mailer addressed his best question of the night to this problem when he asked Miss Ceballos what there was in her New Jerusalem that would make it any less boring than our present workaday world. But such basically human queries seem as alien to the mind of a Jacqueline Ceballos as they would have been to Tolvald's, and her response was simply that it was men who made the world tedious.

If THERE was tedium about in the hall, it was definitely Jill Johnston's objective to harry it. For well more than her allotted ten minutes, she read a list of freely-associated images designed to extol the state of lesbianism and to prove that, to varying degrees, we are all homosexuals. And if the text of her speech was not shocking enough to discomfit Tolvald, or if his morally-cramped brain wasn't up to picturing just what it was she had in mind, Miss Johnston then went on to provide an ostensive definition of homosexual practice. Joined by a pretty girl and a morose-looking *tertium quid* from the audience, she treated us to some minutes of *à trois* tumblings on the floor and then to a wordless, beatific exit. Tolvald, I'm sure, might have experienced an occasional lascivious *frisson* watching the scene, but then he didn't live when such affectionate behavior might be glimpsed for a quarter on any one of a thousand bookstore movieolas.

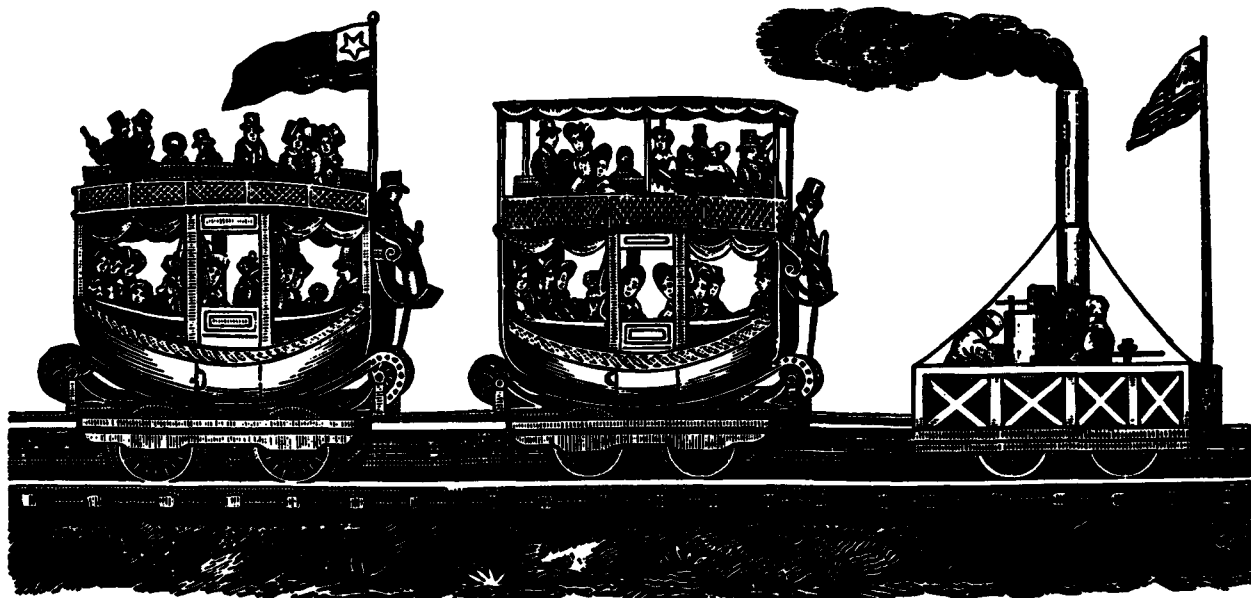
If Jill Johnston and Jacqueline Ceballos were less than flattering in their estimates of what an impartial mind could assimilate that evening, Germaine Greer was downright insulting. She began her talk on a high level by questioning our civilization's image of the artist and its attitudes toward his work. In place of the self-consumed Faustian ego of the West's traditional creator, she posited the modest anonymity of those artisans who erected Chartres, and she looked forward to the day when men and women could selflessly create, without hurting one another by their aspirations, the forms and symbols of their society.

With this, there is no quarrel. One can only wonder what faith

will sustain these self-effacing artists that has a force equivalent to that which elicited anonymous offerings from geniuses of the Middle Ages. However, what followed this questioning of the relation of the artist to his society was truly remarkable. Suddenly, we were being told that the image which men throughout history had created of woman was either that of a goddess or that of an aproned scullion, and because of this conception, it was difficult for women to believe themselves capable of creating a work of art.

Now is it possible that someone of Miss Greer's intelligence and scholarship could really believe, after studying the art, plays, poetry, and novels of her culture, something so crude? Is the scullion/goddess image all that she has honestly been able to glean from Catullus's Lesbia to Joyce's Molly Bloom? I cannot believe that any more than I can believe that she really cared to whom she was speaking. She had her party line and she was determined to deliver it, even if this meant equating Tolvaldism with the collective mind of Western civilization.

Finally, what one really learned from the meeting in Town Hall was that, though they protest the doll's house, most of the Women's Lib leaders want to continue living in it, at least for the purposes of debate. They envy the original Nora's clear and distinct choices and her simpleminded adversary. They want a Tolvald to excoriate and argue with, so they make a Tolvald of all men. Of the deep complexities of passion, of the forces of instinct, of the bondage to nature, of the shadings of desire—of all the joyful and terrible realities with which human beings deal when their consciousnesses have truly been raised, there is no mention at all in official feminist programs. What one seems to be getting instead, and what one certainly got that evening at the Theatre for Ideas, was dogma of such superficiality that, should it encounter the Marquis de Sade, it could do no more than classify him a male chauvinist. Even Nora, a century ago, would have known better than that.



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Books in Review

Inventing the Ethnics

WHY CAN'T THEY BE LIKE US? AMERICA'S WHITE ETHNIC GROUPS. By ANDREW GREELEY. Dutton. 223 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by PETER L. BERGER

ANDREW GREELEY is one of the few sociologists who, for several years, has emphasized the continuing importance of white ethnicity in American society. The present book, dedicated to Daniel P. Moynihan with a boisterous invocation of "the ancient saints of Erin," was evidently written in the flush of what is surely an intellectual's greatest pleasure—to wit, the pleasure of being able to say "I told you so." Greeley is not to be begrudged this pleasure. He is fully entitled to it, as his fellow sociologists and others pounce upon the "ethnics" with the same alacrity that accompanied their previous "discovery" of the blacks.

Ethnicity is not an exclusively American phenomenon, but it has been of peculiar importance in this "nation of immigrants." Following Max Weber, Greeley defines an ethnic group as "a human collectivity based on an assumption of common origin, real or imaginary." Following E. K. Francis, Greeley points out that such collective self-identification constitutes an attempt to retain, under new conditions, at least some of the cultural traits of the old peasant community. Thus it would be a mistake to understand ethnicity as a simple continuation of traditional patterns of self-identification and conduct. It is a new sociocultural construction, undertaken precisely because the old continuity of the traditional patterns has been disrupted. In America this disruption was brought about by migration. Ethnicity, therefore, is a phenomenon that arose among immigrants on American soil; as such, it did not exist in the countries of origin.

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An analogous phenomenon is "nativism" in societies undergoing the shocks of modernization: "Nativism" is not simply the continuation of traditional ways, but a novel affirmation of these ways in the face of a powerful threat. Both ethnicity and "nativism" are original reconstructions, despite their appeal to the "old country" and the "old ways."

It is in this sense that the words "assumption" and "real or imaginary" in the above definition are important. An individual from a Sicilian peasant community, prior to migration, identified himself in terms of family, clan, and village, at best in terms of region. Only in America does it begin to have meaning for him that he is "a Sicilian," let alone "an Italian." Ethnicity thus involves the adoption of new identities. It also involves the adoption of new cultural styles. East 86th Street, in New York City's Yorkville, not only bears little resemblance to today's Germany, but just as little to any past Germany. Rather it represents a reconstruction of Germany by the imagination of German ethnics in America, a Germany of the mind and of nostalgic fantasy. To say this, however, in no way denies its reality—an *American* reality, that is.

The bulk of Greeley's book consists of evidence that ethnicity is still an important facet of American life and of argument that, on balance, this is a good thing. Contrary to what has been a widespread belief until recently, ethnicity is not disappearing. There continue to be significant differences among ethnic groups, in matters ranging from income levels (more than three times as much for Irish as for French-Canadians) to responses to physical pain (Irish suppress, Italians exaggerate it). One important expression of ethnicity is identification with a neighborhood (Greeley calls this "social turf"), an identification that becomes more militant in the measure that the ethnic character of the neighborhood is threatened.

This threat has mainly come from blacks in recent years, and the recent resurgence of ethnic feeling can to a considerable extent be understood as a reaction to the black movement.

Greeley does not deny the potential of ethnicity for bigotry and divisiveness, but he accents its positive contributions. In a highly mobile and *anomie*-ridden society, ethnicity provides many people with a degree of stability and with what Erving Goffman has called an "identity kit." This is a very useful social function, and Greeley comes very close to saying that if ethnic differences had not existed, they would have had to be invented. Only if people have some sort of home base by which they can locate themselves in society, will it be possible for them to identify themselves comfortably with wider solidarities. Greeley cites the Jews as a prime example of the successful realization of this formula. This also has its positive political uses. A city in which ethnic groups are organized for collective bargaining (as in Chicago) is easier to govern than a city composed of unorganized, amorphous masses (like Los Angeles). Greeley bids us recognize the wisdom of the old Democratic party politicians, who have always understood this instinctively, and he is vociferous in his scorn for the liberal reformers and their ignorance of the ethnic realities. It may be added that one can concede this point without necessarily sharing Greeley's apparent admiration for Mayor Daley.

This is a timely, well-written, and provocative book. It has some weaknesses and it raises some questions. The weakest and most irritating chapter is the one in which Greeley argues that intellectuals constitute an ethnic group. The intent of the chapter (which previously appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*) is obviously polemical. Greeley is saying that intellectuals too live in ghettos among their own kind, that they can be as bigotry-ridden in consequence as any eth-

nic, and that there is both irony and moral ambiguity in the way intellectuals look down upon "other ethnics." All this is quite true, but it is unfortunate that a piece originally written as a tongue-in-cheek sermon is now incorporated in a book of serious analysis. Once having made this choice, Greeley feels obligated to speak of the "intellectuals' ethnic group" all through the book, which makes no sense in terms of his own definition of ethnicity and which confuses the argument.

A more serious weakness is what Greeley implies for the future development of American blacks. He analyzes ethnic assimilation in a series of steps, from phase 1 ("cultural shock") to phase 6 ("emerging adjustment"). There is the strong suggestion that these steps are something like a law of American society, so that all groups will go through an essentially similar development. Greeley says it is his "guess" that blacks are now moving from phase 3 ("assimilation of the elite") to phase 4 ("militancy")—evidently with the implication that, eventually, they will proceed the rest of the way to "adjustment." Perhaps this is the way it will be. Or perhaps this is where Greeley (along with many others) is indulging in some wishful thinking. It is possible that, despite the angry separatist rhetoric in the air today, blacks will follow the patterns of white ethnic groups and eventually settle down to a more or less happy *modus vivendi* with the overall society. It is also possible, however, that at least part of the rhetoric will be fulfilled in the construction of rigidly segregated social and economic, perhaps even political, institutions. The latter scenario would be a consummation of bitter irony, because it would institutionalize the very condition of "internal colonialism" against which the rhetoric is directed. It is a possibility to be resisted with all available means. Such resistance, however, is not aided by the notion that, through some sociological law, the blacks will eventually go the way of the Irish and the Italians, and that therefore the separatist rhetoric need not be taken too seriously.

The book also raises some ques-

tions. Greeley is undoubtedly right when he says that "ethnicity is one of a number of ways in which Americans may identify themselves and which they may use as part of their self-definition." He might have pushed this insight further by pointing out that other identifications are possible and by stressing more strongly that ethnicity is, after all, neither an inevitable nor an irreplaceable "assumption." Other identifications, "real or imaginary," might come to the fore. For example, if the present dropping-out movement among upper-middle-class youth should result in a counter-culture of sizable proportions, new *ideological* criteria for self-definition in America might come into being. As a New York City taxi driver recently put it, with enviable sociological sophistication: "I don't think, in the end, that the fight will be between black and white, young and old, or between nationalities. In the end, I think, it'll be between those who don't want to work any more and those of us who'll still be working." (He added: "And I think *we'll* win.") In other words, repudiation of or allegiance to the Protestant ethic may become more important for self-definition than ethnic identity. In *this* scenario it is even possible that the old category of "working class" may attain unexpected social reality, albeit in a sense diametrically opposed to its Marxist usage.

Be this as it may, we can be confident that white ethnic groups will be in the public attention in the next few years. Greeley is right in welcoming this. He would also agree that there are dangers.

The organization of increasing sectors of our public life by "totemic clans" (Greeley's own term) is not an unambiguously delightful prospect. It is also possible that intellectuals, rejected by the blacks and put off by the counter-culture, may jump on the bandwagon of a new mystique of ethnic populism. We need not worry, though, that Greeley might become the prophet of such a new movement. He is too good a sociologist, he has a healthy sense of humor, and he is effectively protected from the prophetic role by a thick armor of irrepressible Irish contrariness.

God, Man, World

THE STAR OF REDEMPTION. By FRANZ ROSENZWEIG. Translated from the second edition of 1930 by William H. Hallo. Foreword by N. N. Glatzer. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 445 pp. \$10.00.

Reviewed by MICHAEL A. MEYER

TO ANYONE even remotely interested in 20th-century Jewish thought the name of Franz Rosenzweig has long been familiar, as are the outlines of his extraordinary life. Born into a cultured, assimilated Jewish family in Kassel, Rosenzweig received only the most rudimentary Jewish education. His interests lay outside Judaism: first in medicine, then European intellectual history, philosophy, literature. At the University of Freiburg he came under the influence of the historian Friedrich Meinecke who prompted him to write a major treatise on *Hegel and the State*. But shortly before World War I, Rosenzweig underwent an intellectual—today we would probably say an identity—crisis. His great ability to comprehend the past and to give it form and shape, the historicist heritage of Wilhelm Dilthey and his teacher Meinecke, had set him aimlessly adrift. By endeavoring to understand all, he had lost himself. In the turbulence of a Europe rushing toward war, he began to seek a mooring that could hold fast against the inexorable tide of historical events. From the discipline of history he withdrew to existentialist philosophy and theology, from relativism to revelation.

For Rosenzweig, there seemed at first to be only one serious elaboration of a trans-historical point of anchorage. Relatives and acquaintances who had become serious about religion were unversed in Judaism and therefore chose Christianity as the obvious expression of their new faith. In the summer of 1913 Rosenzweig too was at the point of conversion.

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Only a decisive, perhaps theophanous, experience at Yom Kippur services in Berlin that year turned him around. He was compelled to conclude that while Christians must come to the Father via the Son, Jews, as God's people, already dwelt with Him. Thereafter, Rosenzweig began a lifelong return to Judaism: intellectually, first by attending Hermann Cohen's lectures in Berlin and later studying Jewish sources with Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel in Frankfurt; practically, with the gradual acceptance of an increasing portion of Jewish tradition as personally directed divine commandment.

In Frankfurt he founded an unusual institute of Jewish studies intended to reintroduce Judaism to those who, like himself, were trying to find their way back. There he drew into his orbit some of German Jewry's brightest intellectuals, a number of whom taught at his *Lehrhaus*. And then, late in 1921, at the age of thirty-five, he noticed the first signs of a nerve disease which progressively paralyzed his body. Amazingly, he held on to life for another eight years: maintaining his sense of humor, writing essays, translating much of the Bible together with Martin Buber, and rendering into German Judah Halevi's Hebrew poems without loss of meter or rhyme.

The remarkable, courageous life, the reversion to Judaism both theologically and in practice by one so absorbed in European culture, have kept Rosenzweig's name very much alive in Jewish religious circles. He is spoken of favorably by traditional Jews for whom Buber—because he rejected the Halakhah and frequented no synagogue—is anathema. He has also served as a model for secular Jews seeking a return to religion.

UNTIL NOW the principal text for Rosenzweig in English has been Nahum Glatzer's *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*,* which combines biography with brief selections from Rosenzweig's shorter writings and letters. Included as well are a few excerpts

from the Rosenzweig magnum opus, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (*The Star of Redemption*), most of which are taken from Part III. But this work as a whole remained untranslated, accessible only to those who could avail themselves of the German text. Most potential readers were thus unable to explore at first hand the philosophical basis for Rosenzweig's return to Judaism and to appreciate fully the radicality of his thought. Now, fifty years after its first appearance in Germany in 1921, *Der Stern der Erlösung* is at last available in English. Here, finally, is Rosenzweig the systematic thinker, the "philosopher-theologian," seen apart from his biography.

The Star of Redemption is not a book to be read casually. It does not afford the aesthetic satisfaction of Buber's *I and Thou* or of Abraham Heschel's evocative writings. Rosenzweig wrote a philosophical-theological work which requires the utmost mental concentration and even then often leaves the best-intentioned reader in a quandary. Gershom Scholem has noted that in its time it was considered one of the most difficult works in the literature of philosophy. Rosenzweig himself suggested that it could not simply be read through in sequence. It must be conquered: first the citadel of the main ideas, then the minor fortresses of lesser points. In Weimar Germany the book went through two editions, but usually remained unopened on the shelves of cultured Jewish homes. Some thought, Rosenzweig once quipped, that it was an admonition to "keep kosher."

Yet the main outlines of Rosenzweig's thought are relatively clear. The book opens with the intractable and supremely individual fact of human mortality. All philosophizing begins with the fear of death and in some fashion tries to overcome it. The web of thought then spins outward to encompass God, man, and world in the single philosophy of the All. It is a tradition traceable from Parmenides to Spinoza and finally to Hegel, the object of Rosenzweig's special interest and the last great exponent of the equation between being and reason. Rosenzweig aims

at nothing less than to commit high treason against the canons of this most central philosophical tradition, to follow the path of personal revolt already laid out for him in part by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. There is not, Rosenzweig insists, a single all-encompassing essence but three primal and irreducible entities which in their original state stand unrelated to each other: God, man, and world. They form the immutable points of a triangle that symbolizes the "pre-cosmos," as Rosenzweig terms it. Despite all efforts, human reason remains unable to reduce their essential disparity. Pagan attempts to bring the points out of isolation—and Rosenzweig illustrates with abundant examples—have produced the mythical view of God, the plastic world of art, and the tragic, heroic man—but they have failed to bridge the chasms of isolation.

The three entities can be brought into real relationship only by the initiative of God, expressed first in the act of creation. For Rosenzweig, creation means God's affirmation of the world, His summoning it into genuine existence and sustaining it in the relationship of creator and creature. As in creation God tears the world out of primordial seclusion, so in revelation God's voice breaks through the isolation surrounding man as He turns to His creature in love. God's only commandment is to requite the love. He says to man: "Love Me," and nothing more. Yet out of this love is born a sense of sinfulness, for the first time a genuine soul, and an anguished prayer for the coming of the Kingdom which will universalize such love. More importantly, there arises out of God's love the turning in love to neighbor and hence the task of "ensouling" the world. Man himself works at constructing the final link, that between man and world, whose goal is redemption—the ultimate all-embracing unity which philosophy posits at the beginning but Rosenzweig allows only at the messianic end. Thus, as the second triangle of creation, revelation, and redemption is superimposed inversely upon the first, a star takes shape which for Rosenzweig is no mere ethnic en-

* Schocken Books, Second Edition Revised, 1961.

sign of Judaism but the ultimate ontological symbol.

Judaism—and Christianity—are given special and complementary roles to play in this theological drama. Judaism anticipates the redemption even in the present moment. As God's people, the Jews live in eternity even as they exist physically in time. In the circuit of the liturgical year the Jew already possesses an expression of the intimate relation with God which non-Jews must conquer for themselves in history. As it is the task of the Jew to dwell removed from the course of world events, so it is the Christian's mission to master time, to proselytize the world and strip it of paganism. In Rosenzweig's imagery, the Jewish people is the eternal flame that burns at the center of the Star, Christianity the eternal rays that reach outward into history. Together and interdependently they constitute the instruments of redemption.

That is the schema. Needless to say, such a skeletal outline does scant justice to the intricacy of Rosenzweig's thought. His discussion is everywhere fleshed out by examples and modes of explanation drawn from such diverse sources as mathematics, grammar, liturgy, aesthetics, history of religion, biblical exegesis, and literature. A multi-dimensional symmetry takes shape for the reader who can assume distance and view the work as a whole. Emerging through the final "gate," one can trace back a well-ordered course through the exquisite labyrinth of thought that separates the death of the beginning from the final mystical vision of the Countenance, which prompts not absorption—at least not yet—but leads immediately into life.

THOSE who have so often and so casually mentioned Rosenzweig will now have to read the book. Without doubt most will be challenged and exhilarated. But they will also be frustrated and despair of understanding him fully. With all of its critique of philosophy, *The Star of Redemption* remains a speculative tour de force, intimately related to a philosophical world of discourse which is today far removed, especially for



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non-German readers. Nor will they find everything they may expect. For those who have looked to Rosenzweig for a justification of the traditional Jewish life, reading the *Star* will almost surely bring disappointment. At this particular stage in his thinking Rosenzweig chose to illustrate revelation by the relation of God and man as lover and beloved in Song of Songs, not by the Sinaitic commandments. Only in his shorter, later writings and letters, once he had himself come closer to the tradition, did he dwell upon the significance of the *mitzvot*.

Then, too, for many—perhaps most—who open its pages, the *Star* will appear simply too great an act of faith, too idiosyncratic a construction, too personal a vision. And some elements of Rosenzweig's thinking will seem exceedingly narrow or even morally pernicious. Rosenzweig, to be sure writing well before Hitler, defined the Jewish people in frankly racial terms: it draws its eternity from the "mysterious sources of the blood." One is *born* a Jew; one *becomes* a Christian. Having its existence outside of time, Judaism is expressed in the ever-recurring cycle of Sabbaths and Festivals, not by participation in historical events, neither those specifically concerning the Jewish people like Zionism (which Rosenzweig, unlike Buber, did not espouse, though he favored settlement on the land) nor those of world history, despite their ethical dimensions. For all of Rosenzweig's own moral concern, his system makes historical action the sphere of Christianity, not of Judaism. As for other religions, they have no role at all in the scheme of redemption. Hinduism and Buddhism have been unable to bring the world out of its primeval seclusion, while Islam, the object of a sustained polemic, fails to qualify as a religion of genuine revelation. Rosenzweig's Judaism-cum-Christianity plan of redemption may seem distressingly parochial, if not presumptuous.

TRANSLATING *The Star of Redemption* from German is a formidable, almost hopeless task. Perhaps in no other philosophical work is verbal expression so intimately as-

sociated with idea, or the equivocality and specific structure of words within a particular language so purposefully used to evoke the embeddedness of an idea in human discourse. It seems almost as if the philosophy cannot exist outside the matrix of the German language. William Hallo's translation must therefore be viewed with the utmost appreciation of the enormous obstacles it has had to surmount. Yet, unfortunately, the English text has fallen somewhat short of even realistic expectations. Although the translation was done with considerable care and successfully introduces some ingeniously devised English equivalents, its virtues must be measured against certain infelicities of style, a number of inaccurate and occasionally misleading renditions, and some inconsistencies in the translation of philosophical terms. The greatest defect, however, lies in the almost complete lack of explanatory notes and the absence of a comprehensive philosophical introduction. The index of names which is supplied does not substitute for notes; it offers only confirmation of a good guess. If, for example, I already suppose that the "most determined systematic philosopher of the last generation," mentioned on page 102, refers to Hermann Cohen, I can verify my identification by looking under "Cohen" in the index. But there is no note on the page itself to apprise me of this information. Nahum Glatzer's Foreword is surely of interest, yet it provides only the briefest explication of Rosenzweig's philosophy. That relatively better justice might have been done to the work will be clear to anyone who compares the English version with the recent Hebrew translation by Yehoshua Amir, and its extensive philosophical introduction by Moshe Schwartz of Bar-Ilan University. To understand Rosenzweig in depth, therefore, one is well advised to keep at hand the German original, or at least avail oneself of the Hebrew.

After all of the above, is the book still worth reading? Unqualifiedly yes. For nowhere else, to my knowledge, has the 20th century produced a Jewish thinker so

original and daring in his hypotheses, so vigorously systematic and yet so personal, so suffused with philosophy and yet so critical of its conventions. Reading *The Star of Redemption* in any language is a bracing, heady experience. The vision may not always compel, but it is surely worth trying to see.

Starting from Emerson

THE IMPERIAL SELF: AN ESSAY IN AMERICAN LITERARY AND CULTURAL HISTORY. By QUENTIN ANDERSON. Knopf. 274 pp. \$7.95.

Reviewed by HAROLD BLOOM

QUENTIN ANDERSON's "essay in American literary and cultural history," a superb and outrageous book, sees our current counter-cultural rabblement as having started from Emerson. Emerson, as Anderson knows, directed his ethics of release to the sons and daughters of Boston Unitarianism, a rather different set than the Woodstock Nation. But Anderson's indictment keeps its force—if Emerson gave us these Holy Rollers, spurious vitalists, academic impostors preaching extravagance; if I owe to him (however remotely) the Rites of Spring as celebrated last year in New Haven, and the year before yet more joyously in Ithaca, then my current devotion to the Great Original of American Romanticism requires immediate reappraisal. I adopt the personal tone in necessary tribute to Anderson's intensely personal book, whose largest virtue is that it does not allow deadness of response.

Though Anderson is a little reluctant to admit too large a definition of Emersonianism, a study of poetic influence (in its true sense of the malforming of ancestors by anxious descendants) reveals not much in post-Emersonian American poetry, or even imaginative writing generally, that does not flow from our archetypal rhapsode. Put together almost any list of our writers of the last hundred and

twenty-five years, and you will find that they have one common antithetical father: Emerson. Allen Ginsberg is not a poet who benefits much by being read a half-hour after reading Wallace Stevens, but an informed, useful critic of either will find himself going back to Emerson, either directly or by way of Whitman. I don't think of Robinson Jeffers and of Hart Crane as moving many of the same readers, but they both paraphrase Emerson, almost obsessively. Anderson's realization that he owes Norman O. Brown to Emerson is perfectly valid, but a larger obligation exists between Anderson and Emerson, which he is more reluctant to see. Norman Mailer is a varicose version of Emerson, yet E. A. Robinson and Robert Frost are at least as authentic in their descent. I am wary, always, of describing Emerson as being this or being that, a wariness that I derive partly from the elder Henry James with his heart's cry against Emerson: "O you man without a handle!" Anderson, a deep student of the elder James, chooses to forsake his wariness, and describes for us a marvelously dangerous Emerson, who existed and will always exist, but never apart from a half dozen other selves clustered in the sage.

Anderson's argument, developed with considerable moral fervor, is that the early Emerson, the crucial Whitman (of the 1856 *Leaves of Grass*), and Henry James in his major phase (*The Golden Bowl* particularly) were all imperialists of the self, prophets of "incorporation," who ingested the world and other selves, until a single consciousness held for each of them all of the ideal. To Anderson, these artists murdered time and destroyed all possibility of a shared communal hope. If Anderson is wholly accurate, compellingly just, then indeed Emerson, Whitman, and James are the precursors of the bardic Ginsberg for whom life is a "harmless emptiness," of Brown for whom "thought is genital and bad," of all our contemporaries who would abolish our sense of history in the name of an infantile godhood, supposedly now waking in the self. Anderson boldly offers himself as a restorer of continuities, an affirmer of historicized under-

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HAROLD BLOOM, a new contributor, teaches at Yale and is the author of, most recently, *Yeats and The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*.

standing, and implicitly even as a prophet who will return criticism to a healthy concern with otherness. Should he fail, we will be left with what he tells us is the vision of Norman Mailer, "that genitality has been assimilated to the impulse to kill." The moral burden of Anderson's stance is condensed by him into one particularly stern sentence: "If incorporation begets nothing and genitality is indeed isolate, our image is of an insular Tahiti of orality and the penis transformed into a weapon—both encroach further on the middle ground of work and love where activity is shared."

MANY READERS, myself included, must find themselves responding by honoring Anderson's purposes but rejecting his critical accounts of Emerson, Whitman, and James. This, clearly, is not what Anderson would desire, for he insists that his moral fervor flows from his critical perceptions, though clearly enough his prophetic passion wholly determines what he allows himself to see in his authors. Engaged in a continuous polemic against formalist criticism, he permits himself procedures that strikingly confirm the perpetual relevance of some formalist safeguards to all readers of literature. Yet his humanizing protests against the New Criticism are deeply moving, and his insistence that a full reading of the earlier Emerson and of Whitman would appall most of us is undoubtedly healthy. As a moral critic, Anderson finds unbearable the moral laziness that will not realize "the cost and the glory of being enough for oneself, of living in the momentaneous, of living in the body conceived and felt as the sufficient paradigm of existence." I find myself murmuring respectful assent, but wanting to point to the texts of Emerson and Whitman, to show that they knew well the cost and the sorrow of such equivocal glory. Anderson has a genius for selectivity; his true "Emerson" lives in a literal handful of apocalyptic passages, his "Whitman" in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," his "James" in three paragraphs of climax of *The Golden Bowl*.

Emerson's Orphic Poet, in the exalted conclusion of *Nature*,

chants that "Man is the dwarf of himself," and the early Emerson as frequently tells us that man is a dwarf of disintegration as he more hopefully calls man a god in ruins. Emerson, as Anderson wants not to see, is a dialectician of the spirit. It is Anderson who is a literalist of the Emersonian imagination, and not Emerson, who called himself a seer of unity but cheerfully enough realized he mostly beheld diversity, particulars never to be subdued, a Sphinx not to be solved. Transcendent faith came, even to Emerson, in sudden starts, but "our vice is habitual," and a deep skepticism is the countersong running through all his work, even the earliest. Anderson's "Emerson" is the American Nietzsche of some passages in *Nature* and a few other essays. Emily Dickinson's Emerson, the author of *Circles*, tells us there is "no circumference to us" and a page later laments: "Alas for this infirm faith, this will not strenuous, this vast ebb of a vast flow! I am God in nature; I am a weed by the wall." Whitman is as much the disciple of the Emersonian ebb as the Emersonian flow, despite Anderson's dismissal of Whitman's own skepticism. Even "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," in which Anderson sees Whitman as climbing the shaman's tent-pole, is replete with the bafflement and sorrow of a ruined quester, a relic of the afflatus, and not its demigod. I am not a constant reader of *The Golden Bowl*, and admire it rather less than Anderson does, but even. I must doubt that the novel ends in a vision of the "androgynous divine man."

I question the value of Anderson's book as practical criticism, yet my skepticism does not lessen the book's strength for me. Anderson sees only what he needs to see, but that is the glory and the sorrow of American Romantic tradition, by which Anderson is chosen, despite his yearnings for another way of seeing and making. *The Imperial Self* is another Emersonian manifesto, a passionate teacher's Song of Myself, that bravely sets itself against the grain. Anderson writes a prose-poem of self-purgation, to free himself from what seems his own inescapable Emersonianism. His horror of solipsistic self-absorp-

tion is so moving because his sympathy is deep with our contemporary bearers and victims of the antinomian impulse. I surmise, from his book, that he is by temperament a Romantic vitalist, dismayed by the parodies of his own passions that he confronts on every side. His book is a testament to his gifts in our bad time, but he is self-deceived when he concludes by saying that "I have only reported what has been imagined," or else there is unintentional irony in his phrasing. Starting from Emerson, we got to where we are, but the start was much more dialectical and larger in wisdom than Anderson gives us to imagine.

Wastelands

ANTI-SEMITISM WITHOUT JEWS: COMMUNIST EASTERN EUROPE. By PAUL LENDVAI. Doubleday. 393 pp. \$7.95.

Reviewed by MAURICE FRIEDBERG

IN a recent review of Paul Lendvai's new book, Vladimir Dedijer, the author of an idealized official biography of Tito and a true "internationalist," informs us that the *real* anti-Semites in the world today are the "court Jews from Vienna, Moscow, Harvard, and Washington who despise their brothers who preach and fight for social equality and justice." Coming in response to a book about anti-Semitism in Communist East Europe, Dedijer's remark is reminiscent of the old "What about lynchings in the South?" gambit with which any mention of Stalin's purges used to be greeted in certain circles in the 1930's. But Lendvai is not writing about any putative threat to Jews posed by other Jews who work in the governments of the world; he is writing about actual campaigns of political anti-Semitism of a highly traditional and highly murderous kind, one of whose effects has been to remove any trace of "court Jews" from the capitals of the four countries with which his study deals.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG is director of the Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University.

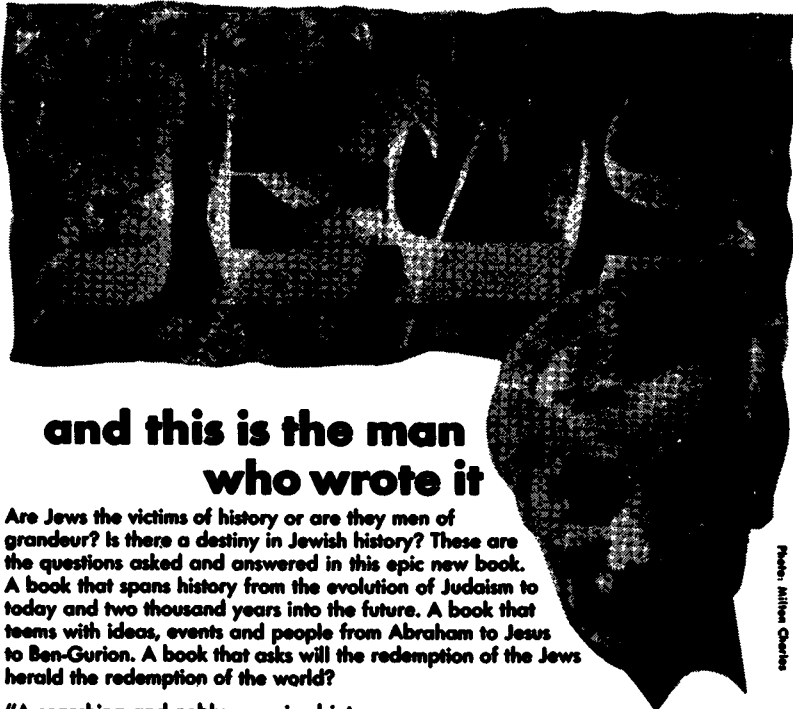
THE pre-war Jewish population of the four countries discussed in *Anti-Semitism Without Jews* (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania) was nearly five million. Fewer than seven hundred thousand survived the war, and, as a result of emigration, only one-third of this number remained in 1968. Before World War II, Mr. Lendvai points out, every eighteenth East European was a Jew. In 1968 there was only one Jew per four-hundred-and-twenty inhabitants. And yet the virtual absence of Jews did not bring about the disappearance of anti-Semitism. On the contrary; during the last few years anti-Semitism reemerged as a potent political weapon in East European countries.

In Poland, for example, as is now commonly recognized, anti-Semitism was used as a political football in the recent power struggle which resulted in the unseating of Gomulka—a struggle incidentally which may yet prove to be far from over. Launched in the wake of the Six-Day War and ostensibly aimed against Jewish sympathizers of Israel, the propaganda drive rapidly degenerated into an orgy of blatantly racist, anti-Semitic vituperation and harassment which culminated in the virtual expulsion of over half of Poland's twenty thousand Jews. The Communist Polish "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1967-69 should therefore be viewed as a macabre mop-up operation: it destroyed those remnants of Jewish life that had escaped the Nazi Holocaust and a Jewish community that was as old as Poland itself.

If the anti-Jewish drive in Poland was, in a sense, domestic in origin (it was inspired and framed by the more xenophobic segments of Poland's own Communist party), the anti-Semitic campaign in Czechoslovakia which accompanied and followed the Soviet invasion of that country in 1968, was, in Mr. Lendvai's view, distinctly "imported." It has been and continues to be used by the Soviet Union as a weapon against the surviving remnants of Czechoslovak liberalism. The methods employed are quite primitive. More often than not they boil down simply to identifying prominent liberals with the Czechoslovak Communist

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party as Jews—incidentally, with little regard for accuracy. Thus, the list of unmasked “Zionists” includes Eduard Goldstücker, the former head of the Writers Union who is, indeed, a Jew, as well as Jiri Hajek, the Foreign Minister in Dubcek’s liberal government, whose ancestry is impeccably Aryan. At the same time, every effort is made to link the liberal cause in Czechoslovakia with the State of Israel and with “international Zionism.” As in Poland, the drive was accompanied in its early stages by a mass exodus of Jews so that, for all intents and purposes, Czechoslovakia’s Jewry has ceased to exist as a viable community.

THE major part of Mr. Lendvai’s book is taken up by a detailed account of these recent anti-Semitic campaigns with only brief chapters devoted to developments in Hungary and Rumania. Documented with a truly extraordinary thoroughness, *Anti-Semitism Without Jews* will surely remain one of the definitive accounts of the recent anti-Semitic convulsions in Eastern Europe. It is therefore much to be regretted that the book’s analytic sections, unlike its purely documentary ones, are marred by a narrowly partisan approach, a shortcoming further aggravated by the author’s rather limited familiarity with Jewish history as well as that of Eastern Europe as a whole. Thus, for example, while referring to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, he writes of a “fear and hatred of Russia, the traditional oppressor of these small nations.” Yet Russia, far from being regarded as an oppressor in these countries, and particularly in Bulgaria, has traditionally been viewed as a friend and a liberator. Similarly, one is dismayed by Mr. Lendvai’s assertion that prior to World War II, in spite of persecutions, East European Jews refused to leave their native lands because “Exodus appeared to them as a surrender to anti-Semitism, an abdication of their rights and their beliefs in the rationality of man.” Actually, the real reasons were a good deal less ideological and less heroic, being rather well summarized in the old Yiddish song—*vu ahin zol ikh gein*

(“Where am I to go?”). The doors to British-ruled Palestine were all but closed, emigration to other countries was extremely difficult; beyond that, there was the inevitable inertia and attachment to an accustomed way of life, however impoverished and insecure.

The ideological underpinning for Mr. Lendvai’s book seems to come mainly from Isaac Deutscher’s essay, “The Non-Jewish Jew,”* which is the most frequently cited single theoretical authority in the volume. I cannot here embark on a critique of Deutscher or Deutscherism, yet it must be pointed out that Deutscher’s well-known Trotskyist-Marxist position renders his credentials—as a Jewish historian at least—very much open to question. Mr. Lendvai’s failure to provide correctives to Deutscher’s highly opinionated observations and very selective use of historical data imparts some of the same dogmatically ideological flavor to his own interpretation of the data he has so masterfully assembled. The most obvious example is the author’s tendency to examine only that form of anti-Semitism which is clearly government-inspired and to disregard the rest, in good Marxist fashion, as a deplorable survival of the bourgeois past in the consciousness of man. But there is also noticeable throughout the book—side by side with a feeling of outrage at the injustice of discrimination against *assimilated* Jews—an apparent lack of sensitivity to the problems of those Jews who aspired to a tolerance of their separate religious and cultural identity within a non-Jewish society.

Time and again Lendvai sidesteps issues he finds not to his liking. Thus, in the early part of the book where its themes are being set out, he writes that “This is not the place to dwell on Marx’s youthful essay on the Jewish question and his unreserved rejection of Jewry and Judaism for which he has so often been accused (in our opinion unjustifiably) of anti-Semitism.” Indeed, one wants to

ask, why should this *not* be the place for a discussion, however brief, of a problem that is so clearly relevant to the subject of the book? Mr. Lendvai offers no explanations. Or, on the following page: “Although leftist or socialist anti-Semitism is not as such part of our survey, I would like to make one point absolutely clear: the political anti-Semitism of Stalin and his successors cannot be regarded as an offshoot of anti-Jewish currents in the early and genuinely leftist or socialist movements.” Why not? Isn’t this, in effect, a refusal to discuss unpleasant subjects?

A GIFTED journalist, Mr. Lendvai has produced a somewhat unbalanced account of a desperately important contemporary event. The weaknesses of the book come to the fore when he attempts to fill the additional role of historian and sociologist, a task which, indeed, should perhaps not be undertaken at this early date, given the fragmentary nature of the evidence at our disposal. As a reporter, however, Mr. Lendvai is usually excellent. In particular, his dramatically told and thoroughly researched account of the demise of two Eastern European Jewish communities deserves to be widely read today, and will certainly provide a wealth of information for future scholars of this subject.

Acquainted With the Night

ROBERT FROST: THE YEARS OF TRIUMPH, 1915-1938. By LAWRENCE THOMPSON. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 744 pp. \$15.00.

Reviewed by DAN JACOBSON

IMAGINE a famous poet, revered by the public for his wisdom and humanity, who attracts to him a young academic disciple; imagine that the disciple learns that behind his serene façade the poet is a vain, vindictive old hypocrite; that the disciple hides his shock and anger at the discovery, and as a result is rewarded with the task of composing the official biography.

DAN JACOBSON’S most recent novel is *The Rape of Tamar* (Macmillan).

* Walter Laqueur places this essay in its proper historical context in his article, “New York and Jerusalem” (February).

phy; that for twenty years he follows the poet around, zealously gathering the material which he knows is going to destroy the other's public reputation after his death; that at last the old man dies, and two decades of accumulated bitterness can be given expression . . .

It's a good story; Henry James might have been able to use it to advantage. Whether or not anything like it lies behind Lawrence Thompson's two distended volumes on Robert Frost,* I would hesitate to say. What is certain is that the books throw a strange light on the friendship that existed between the two men. Almost wherever he can, Frost's chosen biographer puts the worst possible construction on his subject's behavior. When Frost writes a thoughtful letter to a friend in British Columbia about his theories of poetic diction, this is promptly associated with his "almost desperate campaign of self-promotion." In British Columbia? When Frost expresses agreement with a friend's views, it is "sycophancy." When he mentions that he has been offered a job at Harvard, he is "boasting," and so on, repeatedly, over the 1,500 pages we have so far been offered.

The author's style is quite without distinction; he has no gift for evoking character; his summaries of emotional crises and intellectual developments are lifeless. Nevertheless, the stories and documents assembled here will, without doubt, explode forever the image of the unassuming, generous New England farmer-poet that Frost himself so assiduously cultivated. Indeed, by the end of the second volume the reader is inclined to feel that one would have had to be an angel to cultivate Frost's company at close quarters for as long as Professor Thompson did without developing an active dislike for him. (I leave aside the question as to why one should put oneself through such discomfort in the first place. Or the second place, rather.) Nevertheless

*The first volume, *Robert Frost: The Early Years, 1874-1914*, appeared in 1966 (639 pp., \$12.50); and Professor Thompson is preparing the third and final volume, *The Years of Glory*.

it must be admitted that if it was Thompson's ambition to write the truly "definitive biography" of Frost he has succeeded beyond all question. If you want to know the size of each of the houses the Frosts lived in and the exact disposition of the rooms in each, this biography will tell you. If you want to know the names of the professors whose lectures Frost did *not* attend during his brief sojourn as an undergraduate at Dartmouth, Thompson will tell you that too.

Frost's early years appear to have been bleak enough. His father, a would-be politician, alternating between exaggerated bouts of optimism about his prospects and half-savage spells of drink and disappointment before dying of tuberculosis at an early age; his widowed mother, a lady of literary inclinations and Swedenborgian views, making a half-living as a teacher in various raw New England mill towns, fired from one position after another because of

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her inability to maintain discipline, dependent often on the charity of friends and resentful in-laws; his sister, given to obscure hysterias and bitter feuds with her only brother, before finally dying in a state insane asylum; the future poet himself, trying on a dozen roles, from mill-hand to farmer to teacher (most often the last), persisting with nothing except the fierce, unavowed intention of somehow, some day, becoming a poet—we see them all within the context of a society that combined a sanctimonious respectability with a harsh economic ruthlessness. Fair seedtime this poet's soul never had; instead, he would write to the first editor to accept one of his poems for publication, "But this inflexible ambition trains us best."

UP TO the age of thirty-eight, his successes were few indeed. He had been the star pupil at his high school. He had played for the school's football team, though the strain of the games had made him vomit. He had won a place at Dartmouth, which he had promptly abandoned. He had married his childhood sweetheart, holding her to her promise against (it seems) her own later misgivings. He had published a few poems in journals of no particular importance. He had attracted some attention to his unconventional methods of teaching English literature. He had been left an income of eight hundred dollars a year and a small property by his grandfather, in spite of having sought out every occasion he could to quarrel with the old man. On that income Frost left New England for England; and here, in the house he had found for himself near Beaconsfield, his luck at last began to change. His first book of poems was accepted for publication; he made friends among the Georgian poets; he met Edward Thomas, and made possible Thomas's career as a poet; publishers and critics in the United States began to take notice of him; he could already afford the luxury of quarrelling with Ezra Pound. In however small and discreet a way, he was unmistakably *lancé*. End of Volume I.

By the time Volume II ends, Frost has published half-a-dozen volumes of verse, and received twice as many honorary degrees; universities are competing with one another for the privilege of having him as their poet-in-residence (a more novel idea then than it has since become), and publishers are doing the same for the privilege of having him on their lists; his lectures and readings are crowded out wherever he appears; innumerable articles have been written by visiting journalists about his sagacity, compassion, nobility of character, detachment from worldly ambition, and attachment to the New England countryside, his farmer's eye for crop and soil and stock, his indifference to literary folk and all their fashions. It's a triumph, all right; one doesn't want to deny Professor Thompson his right to use the word in his title: a triumph of dissimulation, if nothing else. Frost's rancorous envy of any rival contemporary; his insatiable vanity; his never-sleeping readiness to intrigue for the advancement of his career; his habit of nourishing grievances against those who had done him no wrong but to whom he intended to do wrong; the ugly hardening of his political views into something which was not so much "reactionary" as merely self-justifying—all, all were hidden from view.

It is not a story to make one love the literary profession better. Thompson's tut-tuttings notwithstanding, it would be an exceptionally highminded writer who could read this biography without feeling more than a touch of Frost within himself. Few writers, however, would follow Frost's example in picking quarrels with so many of the people who were best placed to foster his reputation, particularly in its early development. (Pace Thompson's belief that Frost was a master at rigging the critical reception of his books.) The truth is that his malice and aggression almost invariably outran his calculation. "But this inflexible ambition serves us best." . . . What one sees in Frost is an implacable intensity of self-assertion, without which he could never have become a poet, but

which nevertheless doomed him to much unhappiness as a man and which gravely diminished the value of almost everything he wrote.

Of course, a simple way of dealing with the problem would be to say, as many reviewers in effect have said, "The poems are greater than the man!" But if it were so easy for poems to be greater than the men who write them, we would have many more great poets than we do. In my opinion, Frost's poems are very much like the man. What is more, this is one of the reasons for their continuing popularity.

"PERFECT conviction ignores itself, presenting the public truth." Thus Santayana (under whom, incidentally, Frost studied for a short time at Harvard, and to whom he took a strong dislike). In other words, one distinction between the major and the minor writer is not that the former is necessarily above vanity, malice, scheming, and the rest; but that his moral and artistic conviction is so strong he feels no temptation to try to draw personal advantage from his work in his work. Another philosopher spoke of the artist as "pure knowing subject, the clear eye of the world"; what would mark him off from the rest of us is that his eye remains clear and disinterested even when it gazes on the innermost nature of his own experience and imaginings.

These are hard but quite familiar paradoxes. They are illustrated too often in Frost's work by default. He is almost always present as a personality in his own poems, as a man signaling to us for attention. He doesn't trust his experience, and he doesn't trust us with it. He consoles us. He tells us what to think about his thoughts. He exercises charm. And his audience is duly consoled and charmed. It doesn't mind being winked at, twinkled at, nudged in the ribs. It doesn't notice that in poetry these are all forms of aggression.

One sees the process at work in many of those lines of Frost's that have become most famous:

*Earth's the right place for love;
I don't know where it's likely to
go better.*

*One could do worse than be a
swinger of birches.*

*I would have written of me on
my stone:
He had a lover's quarrel with the
world.*

*But something has to be left to
God.*

*I have been one acquainted with
the night . . .*

and all the rest; as well as in a
host of whimsical fancies, winning
smiles, cozily humanized nature
scenes, and in the humorous man-
ner he made peculiarly his own
of eating his poetic cake and hav-
ing it too:

*Don't let the things I say against
myself
Betray you into taking sides
against me,
Or it might get you into trouble
with me. . . .*

or:

*If certain it wouldn't be idle to
call
I'd summon grouse, rabbit, and
deer to the wall
And warn them away with a
stick for a gun. . . .*

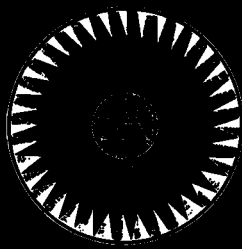
or:

*The tree the tempest with a crash
of wood
Throws down in front of us is
not to bar
Our passage to our journey's end
for good,
But just to ask us who we think
we are.*

*Insisting always on our own way
so. . . .*

There are really very few poems
in his collected works in which
one isn't brought up against man-
nerisms like these; and the more
you read, the more insistent on
his opinions and himself the poet
becomes, and the less of anything
else he presents.

So what is left? Quite a lot,
actually. Not enough, I'm sure, to
warrant a biography of this size
(with a further 750 pages, heaven
help us, still to come in Volume
III); but still, a body of work
which reveals much intelligence,
feeling, and genuine devotion to
the art. The number of complete-
ly successful poems—or to put it



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another way, the number of unmarred poems—may be small; but there is an impressive proportion in which, even if only for lines or stanzas at times, we know ourselves to be in the presence of a most inventive and original poet.

Frost developed his theories of poetic diction quite early, and remained faithful to them throughout his life. "I alone of English writers," he claimed, "have consciously set myself to make music out of what I call the sound of sense."

The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from behind a door that cuts off the words. . . . [In poetry] those sounds are summoned by the audial imagination and they must be positive, strong, and definitely indicated by the context. The reader must be at no loss to give his voice the posture proper to the sentence. . . . An ear and an appetite for those sounds of sense is the first qualification for a writer, be it prose or verse. But if one is to be a poet he must learn to get cadences by skillfully breaking the sounds of sense with all their irregularity of accent across the irregular beat of the meter.

A little later Frost added:

A sentence is a sound in itself on which other words may be strung. You may string words together without a sentence sound to string them on just as you may tie clothes together by the sleeves and stretch them without a clothes-line between two trees, but—it is bad for the clothes. . . . Remember that the sentence-sound often says more than the words. . . . [It] is gathered by the ear from the vernacular and brought into books. . . . I like to drag and break the intonation across the meter as waves first comb and then break stumbling on the shingle.

FROST may not have been as "alone" as he claimed in working to these ends; his program de-

scribes one of the permanently recurring ambitions of English poetry. But he made his own way toward fulfilling the ambition, with a versatility and subtlety of movement that again and again touches and surprises the reader; not least because of what one of his earliest critics, F. S. Flint, called "his ear for silences."

*All out-of-doors looked darkly at him
Through the thin frost, almost in
separate stars,
That gathers on the pane in
empty rooms.
What kept his eyes from giving
back the gaze
Was the lamp tilted near them
in his hand.
What kept him from remembering
what it was
That brought him to that creak-
ing room was age.
("An Old Man's Winter Night")*

*O hushed October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the
fall;
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all.
("October")*

*The sturdy seedling with arched
body comes
Shouldering its way and shedding
the earth crumbs.
("Putting in the Seed")*

*The tireless but ineffectual hands
That with every futile pass
Made the great tree seem as a
little bird
Before the mystery of glass!
("House Fear")*

*First there's the children's house
of make-believe,
Some shattered dishes underneath
a pine,
The playthings in the playhouse
of the children
Weep for what little things could
make them glad.
Then for the house that is no
more a house,
But only a belilaced cellar hole,
Now slowly closing like a dent in
dough.*

*This was no playhouse but a
house in earnest.
("Directive")*

Not all the poems quoted above wholly sustain such a level of impersonality. Others do: I think of poems like "Spring Pools," "To Earthward," "For Once, Then, Something," "The Most of It," and "Apple Picking." Of the long dialogues or monologues, "A Servant to Servants" seems to me far the best, partly because in it Frost was strong enough to dispense with a "frame" of implausible, reassuring lovers or wise farmer-folk, and held himself to the task of presenting without deflection the theme of the poem—which is madness, and the fear of madness. Madness and fear, loneliness and the meaninglessness of effort, are far more persistently the real sources of Frost's poetic inspiration than he was willing to acknowledge. His poetry is almost entirely about rural scenes and rustic people; yet he is far less attached to his people and their setting than he pretends to be. Instead, in his best verse, he regards them with the close, covert observation which we fix upon our potential enemies.

"The poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom": with critical declarations of that kind, Frost won his reputation for being both a wise and delightful man, and became a guide to legions of well-meaning teachers of literature in American high schools and colleges. But it is a singularly poor description of the movements of soul with which his best passages of poetry begin and end. The farmer-sage can perhaps be compared with the young Frost who had been one of the heroes of the school football team; the poet with the boy who vomited in secret from tension and fear after each game. But the boy had to go on playing, at whatever the cost to himself, and the adult, too.



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